アロハ座長
イラスト★ゆきさん
Presented by Aloha Zachou Illustration by Yukisan
Only Sense Online
オンリーセンス・オンライン
07
ファンタジア文庫

マギ Magi
トップ生産職のひとりで武器職人。
ユンと共に新鉱石の加工に挑戦する
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「なんか、変な気分だよ……どうしよう、止まらない」
「熱くてたまらないの早くこっちに来て？」
もしも、【魅了（チャーム）】の罠にかかってしまったら――？
ミュウ Myu
超前衛型のプレイヤーで、白銀の騎士（ナイト）を目指し日夜攻略に勤しむユンのリアル妹
セイ Sei
水属性を操る強力な魔法使い。大手ギルドのサブマスも務めているユンのリアル姉

ユン Yun

A beginner player who chose the worst weapon, a【Bow】and debuted as a crafter. After making full use of enchants and items he started to notice certain possibility——

ミュウ Myu

Yun's real little sister. One-handed sword and light magic-using paladin. A cheat-level player who became a legend in β version.

マギ Magi

An Onee-san who's a weapon dealer counted as one of the top crafters. She's a reliable senior who advises Yun.

セイ Sei

Yun's real older sister. A magic user who manipulates water element. Same as Myu she is a unmatched legendary β player.

タク Taku

The player who made Yun start playing OSO. He's a guide-using gamer who uses one-handed sword and light armour.

クロード Cloude

A weaver. One of the top crafters, shopkeeper of a store which sells tailored equipment. He is the one who created Yun's and Magi's original "Cloude Series" equipment.

リーリー Lyly

One of the top crafters, a first-class woodworker. He crafts staffs and bows, which in turn makes him incredibly popular.

Prologue - The 【Faerie Ring】 and Drop Rate

Countless players aligned items, spending time preparing for dungeon and field searches in the evening. As people shared information amongst each other and traded items during the hours where it was bustling with adults, in the 【Atelier】——

"Hmm. Rice crackers in this store are delicious."

"They'll feel too salty if you don't drink tea with it. Here, sweets."

"I prefer ball candies here rather than crackers. I love sweets."

Finding the time when there's few people in, they have occupied the corner of the store...

"Hey, you all. What did you even come to my store for?"

"Hohee?"

Making a mystified expression, the Mischievous Fairy and her friends desperately swallowed the sweets they had in the mouths and after pouring hot barley tea to fairy-size cups, she then answered my question.

"Eh, this is the most quiet place to take break in the entire town."

"No, I don't intend on making a break station for fairies you know."

Although I stared at her, "and so" she responded and plopped her butt on top of the three-coloured synthetic Gel mobs. Is that like a soft sofa

spoiling people? When I thought so, other fairies also started lazying around.

Seeing a sight of fairies lazying around on sofa with rice crackers in their hands, I could only thing they're picking a fight with fantasy setting.

"So. What are you doing for a while now?"

'Hm? This?"

What I raised up in front of the fairies was a crafting recipe's note with the mixing ratios. I always verified the ratios of the recipes I was able to decipher and I wrote the results of try and error in order to improve their effect.

And, on the page I left the note in there was something slightly different from the crafting verification results.

"I was looking at the 【Faerie Ring】's effect verification results."

"Ahh, that."

Saying so, the Mischievous Fairy flew up to me and touched the ring on the index finger of my right hand. And, as if convinced, she stroked the ring.

After becoming a 【Fairy Possessed】 accessory, as a result of the fairy's release, it did not return to being a normal accessory, but was changed into an unique accessory. I have written results of the 【Faerie Blessing】 effect it had in the notebook.

"The slight increase in stats can't be measured, but the success rate of skills, rare drop rate, elemental damage and bad status resistance are all increased by 3%."

"Is that amazing?"

"No, I've no clue. Isn't that in the margin of error? Well, since it doesn't overlap with other accessories and Sense effects, it shouldn't be too bad."

There was no way I could verify 【Faerie Blessing】's effect alone. Other players who held the 【Faerie Blessing】 items helped me out in gathering information I put up together.

"Well, skill and drop rate's bonus is 3% and in margin of error, but I'm glad it's a fixed value."

Although only some skills had a success rate, the 《Cursed》 skill that reduced enemy's stats is one of those that are sometimes resisted, so its success rate was increased.

Also, since the effect was also applied not just to skills but also manual crafting, the success rate of precise crafting had increased, so it was a great help.

"Just, I don't know if this rare drop rate increase is good or bad."

"I don't know, but is that drop-rate amazing?"

"It's not that important to me——"Then Yun-chan, won't you give it to me?"——Eh, woah?!! S-Sei-nee?! You startled me."

Sei-nee suddenly appeared. I was careless since there's few people at this hour, I almost slipped down from the chair so I grasped the counter in panic.

"I have a bad luck with drops, so I want that kind of item."

"Ahh, speaking of which, you always miss the drops you want don't you, Sei-nee."

Sei-nee was a skilled mage and a sub-master of OSO's top guild 【Eight Million Gods】. But, her only weakness was her greed sensor which was the cause for her bad luck with drops.

"Yun-chan, won't you give that ring to me? I'll pay."

"No way. No matter how much you pay, I won't give it up."

I remember responding the same way when Myu had come just recently, asking for the same thing.

"That's right. This is the proof of our bond!"

Saying so, Mischievous Fairy embraced my right hand as if to show off.

"Uuu, I heard you refused Myu-chan too, but it's no good after aalll."

"Sei-nee, you have safely finished the Fairy Quest too, right? How was it?"

"I used up the wishes before the information on 【Faerie Rings】 appeared."

She slumped depressed. If only I knew earlier, she muttered, but unfortunately I couldn't say anything.

The Mischievous Fairy stood on Sei-nee's shoulder and with "Well, cheer up. Want a candy?" she held out a candy ball.

They were honey candies made with the honey material Mischievous Fairy brought in a few days ago. Sei-nee put it in her mouth and made a delighted expression.

"It can't be helped.. It's not put up on auctions or the stalls as it's an item with limited availability. I should gather guild members and aim for that. It might be good to make them shared items in the guild too."

Saying so, she made her usual smile. That's when Kyouko-san poured her tea and Sei-nee sighed.

This 【Faerie Ring】 is highly versatile and makes a slight increase in drop rate. The method to obtain it has been discovered after the time-limited Fairy Quest added with update had ended.

"If I'm not wrong, don't 【Fairy Possessed】 accessories drop in dungeons?"

"It was added by the update right. They made it so that people who didn't clear the time-limited event are able to enjoy the atmosphere a little."

Although the time-limited Fairy Quest had ended with the last update, the 【Fairy Possessed】 are now possible to obtain through normal play means.

They can be for example found in treasure chests of certain level dungeons or be in stock of NPC stores at times.

In those cases, the number of "Fairy Wishes" was only one, which was very little compared to the Fairy Quest's reward.

"Well, no choice but to be patient and aim for it."

"Is it really something you can aim for?"

"Now, I wonder about that. I might get it while I aim for a boss' rare drop, maybe when I aim for 【Fairy Possessed】 accessory it'll unexpectedly appear right away from some treasure chest. That's why, I'll head to the dungeons in the frontlines and leisurely try aiming for getting one."

She's considering it quite care-freely, while I thought as we talked about it, the Mischievous Fairy bit through the ball candy and entered the conversation.

"I think it might be difficult. After all, they're fairies who were sealed a decade ago, they probably don't have any interest in humans."

"Hee, so there was a setting like that. First time hearing it. Did you know, Yun-chan?"

"Nope, I didn't."

Same here. When I said that, speaking of which it's the first time I said it, the Mischievous Fairy responded, making me exhausted.

"Well, we don't know much about the era when those fairies were sealed, but there shouldn't be too many of them."

"In other words, the drop rate of the accessories is low, you mean?"

"But, if it's hard to get, since it's possible to receive 【Faerie Ring】 and tamed mobs from it, they'll become rarer."

Currently, although there are fairies who visit their original accessory owners like Mischievous Fairy and there's a few dozen of such cases, there were few people whose accessories had become a 【Faerie Ring】. Moreover, as far as I knew there was only one person whose fairy had become a tamed mob.

"Ahh, then, I wonder which is faster, to defeat the enemy mobs for rare drops or getting the 【Faerie Ring】. Well, there's no use thinking about it."

After saying Sei-nee stretched her back, purchased necessary consumables like potions and Revival Medicine and left the store. It seemed like a light chat where she complained for a bit had left her refreshed.

"Still, a drop-rate increase huh. If the probability is low, and the lower it gets, the better the effect is, eh."

For example, if a rare item's drop rate is 1%, after defeating 100 mobs you receive one of the item on average. And with 【Faerie Ring】 equipped that probability rises by 3% to 4% total and rather than 100, you need to defeat roughly 25 mobs on average to get the item.

As expected, having it will probably feel like a huge change.

"...maybe I should go hunt some mobs aiming for rare drops."

I also want some strengthening materials for ornaments, I muttered absent-mindedly.

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I equipped a Sense build for combat in order to aim for hunting rare drops.

Possessed SP29

【Bow Lv43】【Longbow Lv17】【Sky Eyes Lv10】【Speed Increase Lv31】【See-Through Lv18】【Magic Talent Lv50】【Magic Power Lv50】【Enchant Arts Lv30】【Earth Element Talent Lv22】【Cooking Lv30】

Unequipped:

【Dosing Lv34】【Alchemy Lv35】【Synthesis Lv36】【Crafting Knowledge Lv37】【Taming Lv10】【Engraving Lv5】【Swimming Lv13】【Linguistics Lv22】

While doing that, I found Senses that could be grown and proceeded with it.

This time, it was 【Speed Increase Lv30】's higher Sense 【Swiftness】, and 【Cooking Lv30】's higher Sense 【Cook】.

Also, after both 【Magic Power】 and 【Magic Talent】 reached level 50, I acquired the new Sense 【Sorcery】 which had integrated the two.

The advantage of 【Sorcery】 is that it had effects of both 【Magic Power】 and 【Magic Talent】 in a single Sense slot. The disadvantage was that its level would go down to 1 and the stat increase value would decrease, but the growth rate should be higher. Also, it was possible to obtain 【Magic Power】 once again to compensate for it, but I didn't need that much MP in the first place.

And so, the new Senses looked like this.

Possessed SP25

【Bow Lv43】【Longbow Lv17】【Sky Eyes Lv10】【Swiftness Lv1】【See-Through Lv18】【Sorcery Lv1】【Enchant Arts Lv30】【Earth Element Talent Lv22】【Dosing Lv34】【Cook Lv1】

Unequipped:

【Alchemy Lv35】【Synthesis Lv36】【Crafting Knowledge Lv37】【Taming Lv10】【Engraving Lv5】【Swimming Lv13】【Linguistics Lv22】

"The mobs long-distance attacks will work against, and I can take on are..."

I thought about it for a while, but I couldn't think of any appropriate mobs and ended up heaving a sigh.

"As I thought, what a solo crafter can do is quite limited. I'm weak and since my build's half-baked I can only go into places below my level."

Although I tried mixing in some combat Senses, I didn't understand my own directionality in the first place.

Bow-type Senses, cooking, elemental magic, enchants all amounted to being a support. Was I a long-range attacker or something similar, or maybe a mage.

To say, I was jack-of-all-trades and master of none.

"Haa, let's go around beating bosses I can fight with my level, like the Blade Lizard or Golem."

Rather than taking on rare mobs that have useful drops, it was better to aim for weak bosses with a fixed respawn rate.

The rare drops were Stone Bladescales and Stones of Earth Spirits.

"Well, let's go at it lightly."

Using the mini-portal installed in the 【Atelier】 I jumped to the Second Town and moving from there I found the Blade Lizard at the road to the First Town.

There was no one there when I came, I continued to challenge Blade Lizards time after time and then on another day, I kept challenging Golems.

It was something I normally didn't do, but aiming for rare drops with the 【Faerie Ring】, to put it simply, wasn't too interesting.

Against the Blade Lizard, I delivered damage by attacking from a distance with the bow. As I escaped I continued to attack with my arrows until the opponent fell down. Since the attack patterns of the bosses near the early towns were monotone, it was mostly routine work.

Occasionally I bored of it, so I tried attacking with only magic or limited myself to only using the knife, but in most cases it was a waste of time because the damage was much lower than with the bow and since I wasn't used to it I received enemy's attacks. Because of that there were many cases where I had to hurriedly escape into a distance to recover my self with potions.

"As I thought, Golem is stronger than the Blade Lizard, huh."

And so, that was my impression after finishing the rare drop hunt at later date.

The Golem was a mob that had a high durability against physical attacks, the damage dealt to it with arrows and the knife was small, so it took much longer to defeat it even compared to defeating Blade Lizard with magic or the knife, because of which I defeat it only using earth element magic.

As for damage dealt, it was good compared to the other attacks, but considering enemy was of the same earth element the effectiveness was slightly worse than it should be. And so, during the Golem hunting I simply practised earth element magic I normally haven't

used too often. I continued to use magic endlessly and repeatedly recovered the used MP with potions.

"My level didn't go up, but how are the hunt's results?"

Later, when I arranged collected drops, from the rare drops there were 12 Stone Bladescales and 7 Stones of Earth Spirits. It seemed like the rare drop probability increased from 5% to 8%, or maybe this time I just had luck, but I obtained a lot of strengthening materials so I was pleased.

"Still, I've nothing to use them on. Oh well, I'll make some accessories, reinforce them with the materials and put up in the store."

After that, a high pitched sound of a hammer striking metal had echoed in the 【Atelier】 for a while.

Chapter 1 - The Climbing Sense and The Climber

"Oh right. I'm going on a trip today, want to go with me?"

"Haa?"

It was the lunch break in the high school. When we talked as I ate my boxed lunch, Takumi suddenly told me such a thing.

"What is it? So abruptly. A game event? Or maybe queuing for a new game's release? It can't be that you want going to a company's booth on a game show or something?"

When I stared at Takumi intently, he frowned with a disgruntled expression and denied.

"Wrong. Going to an event requires preparation in the first place. Also, it's easier to purchase a game via mail order rather than wait in the queue on release day."

"That's really blunt of you again."

"I don't want to play the games I like as soon as possible, but rather play them even if a second longer."

Hearing that, I had an impression that's very like him.

"Then what is it? A trip, is it about OSO? Why do you have to take me with you?"

Speaking of what I recalled, although he mainly hunted in the game, Takumi had a fixed party members and had an option of making a

temporary party with acquaintances. There was no reason to go out of his way to call me, a half-hearted crafter.

"Others are doing well, that. It's time of studying for tests and taking tests so we can't match our timing."

"Then, how about you study too..."

"Our test period ended last week!"

I don't know how it is in other schools, but our regular tests ended last week and a relaxed atmosphere had spread in the classroom after drilling the tests.

"Also, you know! Watching the same scenery lacks stimulation right. So, I intend to have a change of pace with something different."

"Still, why would you invite me."

"No, I mean, Shun, you haven't gone outside recently have you?"

"Of course I di——"

Having that pointed out by Takumi I tried to refute but——

I went to school, I did housework after I came back, I rest for a little and then started studying.

And during the break time I logged into OSO, where I checked the sales of 【Atelier】's potions and using the skills I quickly crafted items.

Also, if I found some more time I made ornaments with 【Craftsmanship】 Sense in order to put the strengthening materials I got from the rare drop hunting in them.

By using 【Craftsmanship】's skills like 《Colouring》 and 《Design》 I freely changed their appearance and after a change of pace, I returned to studying.

"——Well, it's not like I'm troubled about it."

"Thought so. Even though Miu-chan sees you at home, I'm hearing from various players that you aren't coming out of the store and got worried."

At least show yourself to your acquaintances acting cheerfully. Told so, I could only growl, unable to refute.

"I get it, geez."

"All right, got your consent for going out! Now, where do we go!"

"Hey, I didn't say I'm going to make a party with you!"

"If you want to show yourself to acquaintances acting energetic, it's best to make a party, right?"

Making a pleasant smile, Takumi drank some juice from a paperback that was sold at a vending machine and raised his lunch's chip butty up to his mouth.

One way or another, I ended up accepting it.

However, looking back at my recent activities, I certainly did feel shutting myself in is bad. Going outside on adventure would mean leveling my combat Senses, but I didn't put much importance to that.

"But, it is a fact it's hard for me to adventure alone. My stats and Senses are a jack of all trades."

"Shun, I don't think that rampant picking-up of yours can be simply classified like that."

'Y-you're horrible!"

"Well, speaking of areas appropriate for your leveling, it would be north of the First Town."

After he finished drinking the juice Takumi started to bite on the straw and speaking of his idea.

"Enemies in there are reasonably strong and drop items are quite good. Since for the time being it doesn't seem like I'll be able to party with acquaintances, we can focus on leveling your character and earning some funds."

"And, your real motive?"

"I challenged the areas too high for me, my weapons' and armour durability dropped, I'm out of potions and other consumables too. I'm in red now so I need to compensate."

"I thought so."

When I asked for Takumi's real motives, "but leveling your character being the reason is true as well", he still pressed on the case.

"So, what kind of area is the north of the first town?"

"There's an area spreading along the mountains. What I want you to take care of, are the enemies in the sky."

"Enemies in the sky? Well, I can understand splitting between you doing the close-range and me doing long-range attacks but..."

"The mob you get best experience for is Bunker Bee. Also, if we're lucky and defeat a rare mob called Queen, we'll get some strengthening materials."

"I see. You take the ground, I take the sky. Easy to understand. While at it, while I aim at Bunker Bees take a look around for items to pick up, mainly herbs and ore."

"Then after going home, before logging in I'm going to mail you."

Yes yes. After that we talked about making adjustments and some other pointless things.

After school ended and I returned home, I checked the mail from Takumi and logged in to OSO.

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The place for meet-up with Taku was in front of general store by the north gate. I found Taku, among a few sets of other people similarly waiting to met up with someone.

"Sorry. Am I late?"

"No, no problem. You're on good time."

Leaning on the wall, Taku checked his menu and raised his hand.

"Let's go to hunt as scheduled then."

When we started walking, I could feel the lines of sight in the surroundings gathered on one point. Although I felt somewhat unpleasant menacing gazes, when I looked around I couldn't find them and tilted my head in wonder.

"——nemies in the area are... hey Yun, are you listening?"

"Ah, yes. Sorry. Something distracted me. We were talking about mobs in the northern area, right."

"Right. So in the area along the mountains on the ground there are plant-type mobs called Mad Seeds and Rafflesian's, in the sky appear Aero Snakes and Bunker Bees."

Judging from their names, the mobs on the ground were seeds and flowers. Just recently we fought against plant-based mobs like flowers and thorns during the Fairy Quest. And, the flying mobs that I was supposed to fight were two types, Aero Snakes and Bunker Bees.

"Mad Seeds' characteristic is that they are small and thus hard to hit. Their base stats are low, but they have a lot of defence. And their number one characteristic is——"

"Is?"

"——That they explode."

"Hee〜, they explode... wait, they explode?!"

"Yep, if you don't bring them down with a single hit they start blinking red and approach their enemy at abnormal speed, then three seconds after they stick to someone, they explode dealing physical damage."

"...uwahh."

Just by imagining that my legs slightly gave out. I mean, suicide-attacking enemies are scary."

"If you can take them out in a single hit, they're great mobs to fight. In case they're defeated by exploding on you, you get experience but you don't get any drops for them, so be careful for that."

Since you got no items if they suicide, I felt mild harassment from the developers in that, but in case several of them were stuck in Mud Pool and caused a chain explosion in short amount of time, a phenomena similar to my Magic Gem's chain bonus might occur, so it's better to be careful about that.

"And the other kind, Rafflesian, calls in the Mad Seeds."

"...that's all?"

"No, it has also high physical and magical resistance. Their occasional physical attacks have unexpectedly high damage. But since it's a close-range attack, it's not something you have to worry about from your position, Yun."

"Is that all? If that's the case then there's a lot of similar mobs..."

"The called-in Mad Seeds explode even if they don't receive any attacks."

"Uwahh."

It was like a meta tactic against low level players. Rafflesian's instigated Mad Seeds on players to defeat them with explosions. And, they didn't get any drops for the Mad Seeds, it wasn't too profitable without a proper level. But...

"Hey, Taku. Then can't you use Rafflesians and Mad Seeds for leveling defensive Senses?"

If it's just receiving attacks, it would work for leveling defensive Senses.

"It's possible to level them if you ignore the expanses for damage to armour and the death penalty, but there are more efficient methods of leveling established. They aren't suitable for leveling."

He easily discarded the suggestion. It seemed like there already were people who tried the method of leveling I came up with.

"Aero Snakes and Bunker Bees are flying snakes and huge bee flocks, so I'll explain about them later."

"That's really sloppy. Geez... well then, should I put up enchants now?"

"Sure, go on. We should be in the northern area soon. Once we find the enemy, we'll defeat them one by one moving to the mountainside."

"Roger. 《Enchant》——Attack, defence, speed!"

I put up triple enchants and we rushed along the mountains in the north.

Then before long we found conspicuous plant-based mobs with red flowers that had dots on them——with the appearance of Rafflesian we started the battle.

——*KYOEEEEE*, raising an eerie screech, Rafflesian raised its beautiful flowers upwards cutely and puckering them, spew poisonous red pollen, then started to swing its vines.

"Yun! You aim for Rafflesian! I'll take the incoming small fries!"

"Got it!"

I raised my bow and settled my aim at Rafflesian. In the meantime, Taku held long swords in both hands and cut down the Mad Seeds summoned by the pollen emitted by Rafflesian with a single hit each.

"Now! Bring it on!

Raising his voice he provoked the Mad Seeds which looked like an acorn and continued to swing his swords.

As he manipulated long swords with both his hands, when sometimes the Mad Seeds passed by his slashes, he sometimes sent them flying with the sword hilt.

When the individuals received a hit and started flashing before explosion, Taku took a step forward and killed them before they started moving.

"Whoops, that was close. It really is a good practice for defending."

"No way, you call this defending practice?!"

As the enemy loomed towards him, Taku prioritized hitting them immediately before acting to defeat them, making me feel the difference in our sense of values.

He sometimes avoided with light footwork, parried the Mad Seeds with the side of the sword and kit them with the part of the handle.

The optimized movements for defence looked like a beautiful dance.

"Ops, it's no time to be admiring. I need to do my part."

I calmed myself taking a big breath and drew the bow to the limit. I aimed at the Rafflesian's central part.

"——《Bow Skill - Arrow Stitching》!"

The arrow whose power was enhanced by Art passed over Mad Seed's head and pierced the centre of the red flower with white polka dots and the Rafflesian raised a creepy screech.

Rafflesian didn't fall down with just one hit and had recklessly swung its vines, it tried to block the arrow, but I shot the second and third arrow accurately, delivering damage.

But the Rafflesian wouldn't collapse so easily. As expected of the plant-based mobs, their HP and toughness is extremely high.

"Hurry up... and go down!"

As it cried out, I pierced the Rafflesian's centre and finally defeated it. The moment I relaxed I heard Taku call out.

"Yun! I hit one and it leaked through!"

"Eh? Woah!!"

An acorn-shaped Mad Seed rushed at me. It was already hit by Taku's long sword's hilt as he defended and was flashing before the explosion.

When I saw that, 【Sky Eyes'】 ability activated automatically and the time I experienced had extended.

I immediately discarded the bow and pulled out the knife from the holder at the waist and swung it holding the knife in reverse grip, cutting the seed apart. At the same time my sensations have returned to normal and the repeatedly-blinking Mud Seed fell down on the ground, then disappeared becoming particles of light.

"Sorry. I blew him away in wrong direction."

"No, it's fine, albeit a bit bad for my heart."

Haa, when heaving a big sigh I turned my gaze at Taku, he was dealing with the last Mad Seed.

I recovered the bow from the ground and put away the knife in the holder on the belt. While I was able to fight back instantly with the knife, if the same scene repeats I didn't have confidence I could react the same.

"Haa, if I get attacked like that again I might get stuck with my head going blank."

"Hmm. Really? Well, matter of getting used to."

So in order to get to used to that I have to be assaulted from surprise, huh, I heaved a sigh.

"Mad Seeds are one thing, but Rafflesians have quite high durability. You should find a way to beat them faster, Yun."

"Even faster than that?!"

"If you can, yeah."

"...I'll do my utmost best."

In that case, I had to find a more optimal method of fighting.

From the methods of attacking I have now... as I growled considering that, suddenly Taku's laughter spilled out.

"W-what is it, suddenly laughing."

"Naw, I thought you picked up misfortunate Senses at first, but you can fight quite well now."

"It's not like whether they're misfortunate matters. I've just grown familiar with them."

That was one of the reasons why I haven't used any other weapons.

Although it seemed like Taku was praising me, I was troubled as to how should I react.

"Rather, let's move on. We don't have that much time."

I rushed laughing Taku and we proceeded ahead.

Several times we have encountered groups of Rafflesian and Mad Seeds, and after repeating that we arrived at the edge of the mountains.

In the meanwhile, I was able to deliver much more effective attacks to Rafflesians by using fire 《Elemental Enchant》 on my weapon, but since Fire Elemental Stones were consumed, I had to be careful about the amount of them remaining.

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And, what awaited us when we arrived by the mountain——

"Woah, a cliff huh. And there are mobs up there."

"What are yo seeing now, Yun, are Bunker Bees."

Taku said so and ahead of where he pointed with his finger, more than thirty metres above in the sky, there were two types of mobs flying.

One type,was a flock of bee-type mobs, but they had very atrocious shape. After all, their needles were pointed at their bellies and were very thick. Moreover, they didn't move alone but in flocks of several bees.

"So these are Bunker Bees."

"Yeah. There's a lot of them up in there and they come down tracing their patrol routes. Their method of attacking is sticking to players as a group and stab with their needless like a pile bunker."

"S-scary!"

"Moreover, if you are in middle of a confusing battle with Rafflesian's and Mad Seeds, your body will turn literally into a beehive and you'll suffer a storm of multiple explosions!"

I didn't want to hear such information. I probably wouldn't be able to stand having my body pierced with thick needless countless times and engulfed in continuous explosions of Mad Seeds. Of course, meaning both my mind and HP wouldn't be able to withstand it.

"Bunker Bees have low resistance and defence. Their characteristic is that they specialize in attack and speed. The other enemy type are Aero Snakes, they are small in number and won't come down to attack unless targeted, they're normal flying snakes."

When he said so and I looked in another direction, I saw snakes with green bodies and wings like bats who were swimming in the sky. Rather than flying with their wings, their wiggling in the air made if feel more like they're swimming in the air. It seemed like they used their wings for moving quickly up and down.

For numbers, the snakes moved alone and the bees moved in flocks of nine on average. Among the bees there was a possibility that there was a special one called Queen, but I couldn't tell if there was one.

"Mmhh..."

Looking intently at the pitch black group of bees above us, I imagined the moment the countless bees came at me along with a low humming and I started to get scared.

"...hey, Taku. How about we give up on Bunker Bees, aren't Rafflesian's enough?"

"Stop acting like a spoiled kid. Compared to dragons and giant monsters, this is still quite plain."

"Even if you compare different types of fear..."

Hurry up and do it, he said and strongly appealed at me with a stare. Although I glared at him in response, ultimately I was the one to give in.

"I get it. But protect me well."

"I won't fail with that. So, I expect you'll get us a queen with your luck."

Even at this age I was weak against such baseless simple smile of trust pointed at me. Good grief... I responded and after heaving a long sigh, I breathed in deeply.

Drawing an arrow on the bow, I aimed at th Bunker Bees in the sky.

Unlike Rafflesians who hardly move at all, each bee moved vigorously and it wasn't possible to settle my aim at them.

And so, I aimed at the flock most densely populated with the black bees and shot an arrow.

"It's difficult even for you, Yun. Well, it's natural. It's one thing for magic's area of effect attacks, but your bow has a single point attack."

Just as Taku said, the shot arrow disappeared far in the sky without dropping down a single bee.

And, the fact that it didn't hit had hurt my pride as an archer a little.

"I'll definitely drop them down."

Since it came to area attacks rather than power and effects, I prepared an Art I normally didn't use.

"Taku, I'm going to set it up so take care of the rest."

"Ohh, you're up to something?"

Finding it interesting Taku made a belligerent smile and raised his two swords in preparation for interception.

"《Enchant》——Attack, speed. 《Elemental Enchant》——Weapon."

I put up a speed and attack enchant on myself, and furthermore put on a wind element enchant on the weapon.

And then, aiming at the flock of black bees in the sky I triggered an Art.

I aimed not at a particular individual but at the whole flock.

"——《Bow Skill – Gust of Wind》!"

The Art I have obtained by reaching the specified level had pulled a green tail behind the arrow as it penetrated through the flock of bees.

Without hitting any bee the arrow penetrated the flock, but with a slight delay a green wind pressure had spread, striking entire layer of the black bee's flock in the air.

As the bees received damage from the wind pressure left from the arrow's passage, their numbers decreased.

Rather than damaging a single bee, the entire flock's HP was significantly decreased.

Still, the bees that were further away from where the arrow had passed through were alive and well despite receiving damage, recognizing us as enemies they were coming down.

"Yun! That Art...!"

"I'll explain later, the remnants are coming!"

Acknowledging enemies, Bunker Bees' compound eyes were dyed red and they surged all at once approaching us.

Although the waiting time for using Art still hasn't expired, it was easier to aim at the enemy mobs coming at us rather than aiming at them when they draw 8's in the sky.

I shot one arrow after another and as I shot down the bees, finally the Art had become available again, and I triggered it.

"——《Bow Skill – Gust of Wind》!"

Once again I shot the same Art and had the majority of gathered bees crash down.

Although most of the bees I aimed at were defeated, the bees who rushed over to us were too close and I couldn't use the same Art against them.

I switched the weapon from the bow to the kitchen knife and cut down the incoming bees.

While giving up on arrows I cut down one bee by one, Taku cut down a few, getting rid of the remaining bees immediately.

The moment Bunker Bee's swarm HP had reached zero, the bees who were fighting up until now have escaped into the sky all at once.

Withdrawing when a certain percentage of the flock is gone, they're like army. Thinking so, I watched them leave.

And even though it was just a single battle, I received multiple drops from a single flock of Bunker Bees. Confirming there were a lot of drops, I did a high five with Taku joyously.

"What! So you did have an area attack!"

"Well, I don't have too many opportunities to use it and its power is quite low in the first place."

A little embarrassed I scratched my cheek with a finger lightly. The Art producing a wind pressure had damage lower than normal arrow, moreover, the damage decreased the further the enemy was from the point the arrow passed through.

That's why the bees further away from the arrow survived. Were it magic, probably all bees would receive same damage within the effect range, I thought.

"Well, don't be so discouraged. We've got a good enough attack means. C'mon, aim the next one! Next!"

"Yeah, got it! Let's beat more of them!"

After Rafflesians and Mad Seeds, we aimed for the Bunker Bees and continued to hunt. Although we fought while thinking of the strengthening material that drops from the one called Queen, but that one didn't really appear and we just continued to collect drops from several defeated flocks.

"We repeated it several times and I got used to hunting Bunker Bees, but I didn't manage to bring even one of them. And in consecutive battles too."

"That can't be helped, right?"

"No, but, hmm."

"Worried about something? Or are maybe you're tired?"

Taku turned around as I growled.

No, it's not a big deal but...

"I am slightly tired but... I was thinking that I don't have time to collect herbs or ore, and such."

"You... forget about that when you're hunting or leveling."

"No, I mean! We've come this far, it's a waste!"

As I emphasized that, I was looked at as if I was pitiful.

"But, they are patrolling a wide area and you to stay in one place for a long time. That's why, if you care-freely collected items, we'd lose our initiative in combat."

"B-but, along the mountain there are only Bunker Bees."

"It's fine if I take those Bunker Bees on, but a few of them will surely leak out to attack you, and if I try collecting and you leak some to me, I'll die."

Grrrr, isn't there a way to gather safely. I thought, and was reminded of a certain item.

"Then if we can repel the Bunker Bees, there's no problem, right?"

"If only there was such a convenient ite... ahh, there is one, speaking of which."

Although it was limited to bug-type mobs, I took out the item they couldn't get close to——the 【Insect Repelling Incense】.

If I use this rod-shaped incense, the Bunker Bees won't be able to come close. In other words, the area by the mountains where only Bunker Bees appear will become safe.

"I see. So by using it you make a pseudo-safety area."

Depending on the location, it could be used in order to ensure a place to take a break. I have once ran out of stock since I used them for escaping, but I have remade them and left them in the inventory.

"Got it. Go on and use it in order to safely collect."

I immediately put fire to 【Insect Repelling Incense】.

"If Bunker Bees no longer can get close, you can wipe them out one-sidedly from long distance. That sounds tasty."

Ahead of where he looked up, the insects spread in the air in a reaction to the 【Insect Repelling Incense】's smoke and fled from it moving behind the mountain's cliff.

As expected, I couldn't aim at them when they were hiding, so Taku's one-sided wiping-out was impossible.

"Then while I gather by the cliff, you can rest a bit, Taku."

"Yeah, I'll do that. Still, an item with limited use, huh."

Hmm, Taku put a hand on his chin and continued to stare at the 【Insect Repelling Incense】 placed on the ground as it continued to smoke.

"Could you give me some of this 【Insect Repelling Incense】 ? It looks convenient."

"Sure, but properly pay for it."

"Of course, I can buy them here and now."

Since he said so, I took out five 【Insect Repelling Incenses】 and passed them to him by throwing and received the payment.

"Thanks."

"You're welcome. Well then, I'll start with digging this mining point on the cliff."

I took out the pickaxe for mining from the inventory, located the mining point that appeared on the wall and swung at it.

"Yun! I'll act as a lookout so share some with me!"

"Then, how about fifty-fifty?"

"That's too even. I probably won't be doing anything, right——?!! Yun, avoid!"

I don't really mind if it's half each I muttered and swung the pickaxe, and that's when Taku panicked.

What? And ahead of where Taku had turned to, a voice had come from the sky the bees have disappeared from.

"——UOOOOOOoOooooooaaa!!"

A deep male voice. The scream which could be either a warning or anything else had quickly approached from a distance. No, it was falling down from the cliff.

This sudden event caused my thinking to freeze and I stopped moving.

(Damn, to think I can't move at a time like this! Why did it react when Mad Seed was rushing at me and it doesn't now!)

As I cursed my unmoving legs hatefully in my mind——

"Yun! Avoid this way!"

Seeing me motionless, Taku pulled my arm and sprung away from the spot. The pickaxe I had in my hand had fell out when my arm was strongly pulled, and I fit snugly in Taku's arms.

"UOOOOoooo——"

I looked at the person falling from the top of the cliff.

He had marks of the battle that happened just earlier. And, with the damage from the fall his HP was completely exhausted in front of us.

It might have been the first time I stared so intently as someone's HP turns 0. The player's body fell on its back and wouldn't even budge.

The player who fell down was wearing a durable-looking thick leather armour and a tough-looking metal helmet on his head, for boots he was wearing trekking shoes. It was a muscular man, on his back and the belt he had backpack and belts, and was also equipped with ropes.

Heck, what am I doing, calmly observing him here——

"At times like this, uh——gotta use a Revival Medicine!"

Before I could hurriedly take out Revival Medicine, the man's eyes opened and he stared at us.

"Hyah?! He got up!"

The dead guy just got up on his own! I thought, but as long as someone is in possession or Revival Medicine they can revive even if their HP falls to 0.

After waking up, the muscular man raised his upper body, took out a potion from the inventory and recovered his decreased HP with it.

"Sorry. Didn't mean to scare you. Naw～, I thought I'd die."

Were this reality, I would definitely die. The muscular male player said and laughed heartily.

"What? Did I interfere with young'uns date?"

"HAa? .....?!!"

Pointed out by the man in front of me, I was reminded of my own state. I was seen solidified in a state where Taku had caught me.

I took distance from Taku in a hurry and in order to calm myself I muttered repeatedly taking deep breaths.

("It couldn't be helped. It couldn't be helped. Suu-haa, suu-haa.")

"Yun? You okay?"

"Y-yeah! I'm fine!"

Spoken to by Taku I responded with high-pitched voice, but I somehow managed to calm down and once again faced the player who fell from the cliff.

"Sorry about that. Old man didn't intend to interfere with lad's and missy's date."

"No, I'm not a missy, I'm a man."

"What? Embarrassed about your date?"

"Why does it turn out like this!"

Wahahaha, as the muscular player laughed heartily, I pressed my index finger against my temple as to suppress a headache.

Just how, did it turn out like this.

●

The heartily laughing male player's name was Ivan. He looked so powerful it seemed unthinkable he would fall from a cliff of only that height. Every time he laughed his muscles swelled up and I had an illusion that the leather armour he was wearing had screamed.

"So old man Ivan, why are you here?"

"When I was climbing for a hobby, I made a little mistake."

As for the talk with Ivan, I left it all to Taku. In the meantime I swung the pickaxe recovering materials by digging in the mining point at the cliff's side.

Between the high-pitched sounds of hitting the rock, I stealthily listened to Taku's and Ivan's conversation.

"I'm what you could call a hobbyist player. I use one of the Senses, 【Climbing】 to repeatedly climb those cliffs and rocks."

Rock climbing and bouldering, even walking in the mountains of the modern Japan requires hours of preparation, so in OSO where one

could find natural fields to your own taste and mood, it was easily to perform those.

"Hee, so you did that kind of thing."

"Yeah, mountains are great! They're a man's romance!"

Ivan spoke about the greatness of the mountains as he spread arms of his mountain-like body. Taku sat down cross-legged and talked with Ivan face-to-face.

"Well, that's not so strange. Among my acquaintance players I have some who like fishing, but since they can't go fishing on weekdays they took【Fishing】 Sense and are doing it in OSO."

"I'm similar. I've heard about this game from an acquaintance. I didn't have any interest in the game itself, but I started it for my own hobby."

Really, you know your stuff, lad. Said Ivan happily.

"So, what caused you to drop down from that cliff?"

I stopped my arm swinging pickaxe and listened to Ivan's response.

Folding his arms, Ivan growled and furrowed his eyebrows.

"It's a pathetic story though. I was dropped down from the cliff by bees. Suddenly a horde of bees has rushed at me, I tried to somehow get rid of them but was taken down. But it's not a big deal as compared to snowstorm and avalanche in the snowy mountains in mid-winter in reality."

There was a lot I felt like retorting to.

Experiencing blizzards and avalanches in real was amazing, but considering the fact they were assaulted by bees and the relevance of mine and Taku's actions right before that...

"...Yun."

Taku stared at me. I put the pickaxe back into the inventory and I sat down beside Taku in front of Ivan.

Let's talk honestly and apologize.

"...um, it's just probably, but... I think we might be the reason why that bee swarm flocked to you."

"Oh?"

Ivan put his hand on his chin and raised one brow, interested.

I explained what happened right before he was dropped down. That I had 【Dosing】 Sense, and I described the effect of the 【Insect Repelling Medicine】 and that we used it to chase away the bees from this place.

"That is... I'm sorry."

When I lowered my head deeply and apologized, a laughter had come from over my head.

"Whaat. So that's it. It wasn't on purpose, right? Also, you held a potion wanting to recover me after I fell. No need to worry missy. To begin with it's my problem that I was unable to deal with the bees."

He said that and lowered his rugged hand at my head and stroked it. Somewhat embarrassed, I felt it hard to raise my head. And, as Taku tried to muffle up his laughter... I glared sideways.

"Still, I was surprised. I fell by chance in a place where a boy and a girl are... really surprising."

"I was surprised as well to see a huge man fall from above. Unconsciously I grabbed Yun and leaped away."

"I said, I'm a man! Also Taku, you're doing this on purpose! Why won't you correct this mistake!"

I retorted to the two as they spoke, but Ivan, with his arms folded had tilted his head puzzled.

"What? missy, still hiding your embarrassment?"

"Come on, why does it turn like this! As if I was embarrassed! Taku, stop laughing!"

I'm saying you should just correct it! I said, but he turned his ears deaf to it.

"Geez, I'm thankful for immediately pulling me by my arm, but I can't even thank you."

"Yun. Did you say something?'

"It's nothing!"

I denied strongly, but Ivan looked in my directions with a big grin somewhat pissing me off a lot.

"What's with that face."

"Naw, that's youth for you, I though."

For some reason I got really irritated. Let's call him "old man" from now on.

"Well, whether missy is a man or a woman has nothing to do with me."

"But it's a big problem to me!"

I raised my voice protesting, but he wasn't bothered in the least. On the contrary, I lost the mental battle as he smiled showing white teeth despite his rock-like body.

That sympathetic gaze and its difference with that oppressive physique had caused my comfort to strangely deteriorate.

"Won't you try climbing the mountain with me?"

"Whatt?!"

As I responded with a high-pitched voice, Ivan spread his arms and started talking about the goodness of mountains.

"Mountains are great! Going around in circles on ground is just too small! The places you normally are in look really small."

"And, you can laugh like a villain seeing the world so small."

"Taku, don't make fun of it."

As Ivan started to talk seriously Taku started to ridicule him, so I hit him lightly in the flank where a gap in his armour was. He tilted his body and fell silent.

"When you climb mountains, whether you are a man or a woman, human relations and work troubles, difficulties of life, all of it seems puny! That's how big the mountains are! And they teach you that human worries are tiny! That's why, let's climb the mountain together!"

" "....." "

Taku and I were overwhelmed by the powerful voice. The bass voice had sounded deep inside my belly like a gong and had intuitively caused me to be amazed...

"What's your basis for t——"There's none! If you go to a mountain, you'll understand naturally!"——Is that so."

Ivan was a mental-supremacist mountain dumbnut.

"——And so, let's climb the mountains together!"

"Not even waiting for us to agree?!"

"Spirit of challenge above all. Have a heart of challenge! And so, wanting to get on top of mountains and big rocks makes you a man among men, right?"

"No, that'd be just you."

I have no intention of climbing. Ridiculous, I thought and in order not to cut this talk short I turned my back to Ivan, took out the pickaxe again and swung it.

And towards my back, he said certain something.

"——A man's running away?"

As I was about to swing the pickaxe, my body stopped moving. After a few seconds, Ivan spat out the continuation.

"Ohhh! That's right. You were a weak girl, right. Sorry, sorry. My mistake."

When he spoke those words acting exaggeratedly I frowned, I won't go along with his provocation, I chanted in my mind but——

"You sure are high-spirited, but a girl after all, huh. It's lonely to hear you aren't interested in mountains."

"I said I'm a man! If you're going that far, show me that mountain of yours or whatever!"

Ah, I noticed after I said it. And here I thought I shouldn't let him provoke me.

"Kukakaka!! You bit the bait, missy! You say you're a man, and a man doesn't go back on his word!

"Khh, I am a man! I won't!"

However, unable to back down any more, it was decided that I'll climb the mountain with Ivan.

And fearfully I turned towards Taku.

"Yun. Are you an idiot?"

"Uh, s-sorry. But..."

Taku heaved a sigh and looked at me as if I was a pitiful guy. Stop it, don't look at me like that.

"Old man Ivan, can I ask something?"

"Oh, what's up? You gonna go with us, lad?"

"I don't mind participating. But rather than acquiring a new Sense, even if it's a hobbistic Sense, it's better to learn from someone who already knows it rather than go with trial and error."

But. Taku added.

"Is there any benefit for us in obtaining that 【Climbing】 Sense?"

Narrowing his eyes Taku asked him seriously. This face of his, is that of a gamer. He looks like this whenever he appraises the item and skill effects and the worth of getting them.

In response to Taku acting like that, Ivan put a hand on his chin and groaned.

"Hmm. See, I'm doing it as my hobby. Satisfying my own desire is the greatest advantage of it, but when it come to benefits for others——"

Ivan wondered for a while.

"Can't think of anything. At best, you can pick up ore on the cliff and I found an entrance to a cave above this place. It's right there."

"All right, I'm in! Let's tackle it at full power!"

"So easily?! Taku, are you fine with that?!"

"Rather, there's more than enough benefits for us!"

When he said so, I looked up at the cliff using my combination of 【Sky Eyes】 and 【See-Through】 Senses.

"Why didn't I realize it earlier. There's a lot of mining points up there."

Beyond comparison to the mountainside where I was digging earlier, there were countless places to mine on the cliff.

And, on top of the protruding cliff, ahead of where Ivan pointed to, apparently there was a cave.

If I was able to mine on this cliff, just how many crafting materials would I be able to gather?

"Hey, Yun. Won't you pick up 【Climbing】 and tackle it together with me at full power?"

"I changed my mind too. But, what's in it for you, Taku?"

"It's an unknown cave! There might be a dungeon in the back of it. And it might be leading to an area on the other side of this cliff!"

Taku couldn't hide his excitement as he said so.

"But, Ivan probably investigated it alre——"I didn't go inside."—— You didn't?"

Normally, the discoverer would check it right away, right. I thought, but it seemed like I was wrong.

"Searching caves has nothing to do with climbing mountains. Also, if it does lead to the other side, then I want to get there through the top of the mountain!"

There's a mountain so I'll travel over it. He seems to think. I was appalled.

"In any case. It seems like I successfully got a lad and a missy to get 【Climbing】 Sense!"

Ivan said so and laughed heartily. Taku and I, got fired up and picked up 【Climbing】 Sense from the Sense acquisition list in the menu

By consuming one SP we have equipped ourselves with 【Climbing】 Sense and immediately started studying under Ivan.

"So, Yun and I equipped 【Climbing】 Sense, but what do we have to do to raise its level?"

What Taku asked about, was Sense's basic performance. How is it used, for what action is experience accumulated, what kind of correction is added to actions. We didn't really know such information.

"Certainly, you're right. Even though it says Climbing, everything walking on steep mountain roads to getting up steep walls could count as climbing."

As Taku asked his question, I added my own thoughts too. The pioneer, Ivan responded——

"You do get experience for hiking, but it raises very slowly. Although it might seem impossible at first, but once you're capable of climbing a

ten metre cliff there won't be no problem, based on my experience. From time to time you'll just have to take a break on some ledge."

There and there are ledges you can sit down on. He pointed with his finger, showing them to us.

"First, it's important to climb alone to the lowest ledge. Wait a moment."

Ivan said so and leaving us, he climbed up to the ledge ten metres above without any aid. There, he nailed something in and hung a rope, then using it he returned to us.

"This is a safety rope and a harness. You equip it and go up while driving bolts in at regular intervals. It's your lifeline for when your hand slides. Go on and try, missy!"

You go first, my back was strongly pushed and leaning over I took two steps forward.

When I stood in front of the tower cliff and I wondered where do I put my hands and feet, I naturally realized how does the Sense's assitance work.

I confirmed points mixed in among mining points and put my hand on the rocky surface.

There certainly was a response telling me where should I grab next to climb. But——

"——No wayy! I won't go any further than this!"

I gave up early and raised my voice. Unable to find any undulations within the reach of my hand and was unable to reach further even though only a little was left. And, I went down to try finding a different route but it took a lot of time to return.

"Are you okay, Yun?!"

"Impossible! My arms are all shaky!"

"Calm down, missy. Come down for now!"

Told that, albeit slowly, I carefully went down while looking for scaffolding below me. Then finally, I kicked off from the wall when I approached nearly my own height. When I finally arrived on the ground, I fell on my knees and started laughing before I sat down.

"It's harsh! What's with that, really!"

As I complained, my body trembled unable to find any strength, so I rested myself.

"What. You don't have enough muscles. Eat more meat!"

"This is a game!"

"Well, let's leave jokes at this. You try next, lad. I'll explain the rest to missy while looking at you."

"Got it. I'll be going then."

After saying so, Taku started climbing and it went smoothly as it had for me, but he stopped in the middle. It was the same place I had stopped in.

"Missy, why do you think that doesn't work?"

"Hmm. Since his right hand can't reach the undulation, choosing a route?"

"Actually, there's a trick to reaching that place with your right hand. lad, look in the opposite direction to the place you want to reach and then try again!"

"......? Got it."

I don't understand, said Taku's expression, but the result from his trying it was drastic.

"Oh? I reached. But why?"

He said so and raised up where I couldn't go any further. It didn't seem like his arms were shaky, I lost to Taku in both stats and the way of handling the Sense.

"But, why did he reach it when he couldn't earlier?"

Even though both I and Taku have tripped on the same place, thanks to Ivan's advice Taku had proceeded smoothly.

"It's simple. Although he can't reach it normally even by stretching out his hand, by turning his head in the opposite direction his body naturally twists around and he is able to extend his hand by that amount, is what it means."

I actually tried to turn my left and right, with my neck's movements the opposite shoulder had moved forward. Using reach longer by that amount, it was possible to reach the point.

Taking only a single advice form Ivan, Taku had climbed up ten metres until he reached the ledge, then easily got off and climbed up again, striving to level up.

On the other hand, possibly because I didn't have enough muscles I fought against my trembling arms and repeatedly resting, I stretched the distance I travel bit by bit.

"How is it? Did you grasp the trick?"

"Hmm. It's quite harsh on arms. But I know how to do it, so it feels like I can go further."

"Then go and try it."

"Do your best, Yun."

Told so, I challenged it again.

Ivan watched over me in silence as I slowly climbed up.

"Yun, you're almost there."

"Missy, a little more!"

"Uuu——did it!"

For the last spurt I put my hands on the ledge and climbed up.

Strangely, for the places I couldn't reach before I only turned my face in opposite direction as I was taught to and stretched my body, and I was able to climb up with all of my strength.

"...huff, huff. So harsh."

I rolled and collapsed on the small resting space of the cliff and looked up at the sky with my back on the rocky mountain.

"You two learn quickly right from the first day. There's worth teaching you."

When I looked in his direction, Ivan who was watching us from the bottom had climbed the same distance we have without any lifeline, catching up to us. As expected of 【Climbing】 Sense's pioneer, his abilities were really high.

"...Taku is as you can see, but I don't have any talent, right."

"Lad's just abnormal. You missy, just use your muscles more than usual."

"Well, thanks...?"

Although I was praised, climbing ten metres was enough to have me exhausted.

After resting a little I regained some composure and exhaled.

"All right. Well then, next, we'll repeat the practice we've done so far and aim for twenty metres!"

"No way, impossible! Rather. It's about the time I have to log out."

Although the sun was still high in OSO, when I checked the time in the menu, it was already six o'clock in the afternoon. If I don't start making dinner soon I won't make it in time for dinner at seven o'clock.

"Speaking of which, it's that time already. I'll get some more advice from Ivan and log out too."

"And here I thought the amount of climbing companions increased, how lonely. It can't be helped, let's have a manly talk, lad!"

Then, one-sidedly Ivan placed his hand on Taku's arm. Honestly speaking, it was stifling so I took a step back.

"I'm logging out then."

"I'll be climbing here for a while. If you want to raise your level, come again."

"Sure, in order to dig out the ore in here my 【Climbing】 Sense and skill itself isn't enough after all."

Since I wanted to mine the points scattered in this area so I intended to come here for a while.

And then I logged out, returning my consciousness from OSO's world back to the real world.

Chapter 2 - Bunker Bees and Mountain Mining

A few days have passed since we started receiving guidance on 【Climbing】 Sense from Ivan. Every day we went in front of the cliff and stayed there for a little until evening, Taku and I slowly learned to do new things.

As a result, we were able to climb twenty metres alone and then climb down practically perfectly.

While my 【Climbing】 Sense raised to level 7, I faced a certain problem.

"Hmm. This pickaxe can't be used on that cliff after all."

What I took out was a sturdy steel pickaxe. It was handy to dig ore with by using EX Skill 【Mining】.

However, since it was heavy enough that it has to be held in two hands, it couldn't be used satisfactorily on unstable cliff and bluff scaffolds, so at this rate it would be impossible for me to obtain ore from the mining points spreading all over the cliff.

"Can't help it. Let's go and look for a pickaxe I can hold with one hand."

And, I'll probably get a small pickaxe in the Third Town, I thought, but was able to buy it in a surprising place.

"Mm? You want a small pickaxe? I have one used for ploughing hard soil."

I was able to successfully purchase it from the NPC – Farmer who managed trade with farmland in the south of the First Town.

At first I went to the Third Town and asked where is the NPC selling small pickaxes, but was taught about the farmer NPC and returned back to the First Town.

"Then, I'll buy three small pickaxes including spares."

"Here you go, watch out, they're heavy."

I received three small pickaxes for 5kG each from NPC – Farmer who dealt with land, farm tools and NPC employment mediation and after putting them in the inventory, I headed towards the northern gate.

"Took me some time to buy a pickaxe. Taku seems to have went ahead."

When I told Taku that I'll be late, I received a message from him saying that he'll be going ahead. That's why, I ran straight for the cliff in the north while avoiding the Rafflesians and Mad Seeds that appear in the area north of the First Town.

And, what I saw there was——

"Taku and old man Ivan, what are you two doing?"

Hooking a rope to a thick branch of a tree, wearing a harness and a lifeline each, the two were hanging on the ropes.

Hanging loosely with their spread limbs, it seemed like they were trying to maintain balance, then they raised their upper bodies before relaxing and turning loose again.

Since Taku wasn't used to raising his upper body he turned to the sides, but somehow managed to stop rotating and tried to raise his upper body again. On the other hand, Ivan was accustomed to it so he was able to raise his upper body smoothly, took out a telescopic stock, stretched it to half the length and did a practice swing in that state.

"Oh, Missy. You came."

"Well, I did come but... what's this?"

Some training? I asked, and it seemed like it was a simulation training for climbing.

It seemed to be a training for fighting when you're entrusting your body to a lifeline rope on unstable scaffolding.

"Yun, this is quite hard, but fun."

"No, um, it seems a little embarrassing."

There was no doubt that the optimized methods of training and leveling the 【Climbing】 Senses were effective, but I'd like to refrain from being seen by others hanging on a rope.

On contrary to reluctant me, they raised their upper bodies using their abdominal muscles, relaxed their bodies holding out their hands and arching their bodies backwards like a shrimp, then moved their heads up and down taking balance. However, I'd like it if they stopped with what seemed to be them playing around, as they groaned loudly showing whites of their eyes, it was scary.

"Missy's shy after all. It can't be helped, we'll go do light climbing training with Lad here so try doing balance training alone."

"Well then, I'll switch with Yun. I'll be going with old man Ivan for a while."

Saying so, the two quickly untied their ropes and came down.

Since the way of tying a knot with a rope was part of the training, my survival skills have risen as well.

And, I have seen off Ivan and Taku, when they were no longer visible I started balance training.

"...if I stop before the two are back, I won't be seen right."

I was embarrassed, but since it was the lifeline I entrusted my body to, there was a need of getting used to handling it. Telling myself it's for the sake of leveling up the 【Climbing】 Sense, I equipped the climbing harness that was climbing's auxiliary item, gradually adjusted the rope and knot and I hung my body.

When my legs moved off the ground I let go of the rope and tried to take balance. I tried putting strength in my various muscles and my body began to tremble, somehow I was able to keep my upper body raised up for about five minutes.

"I can... somehow! Do it! Uwoah?!"

The moment I relaxed, the force that has been supporting me until then has changed into a force that moves me and turned my entire body so that I could see upside-down. Since my body was being swung around and I couldn't control it, I gave up on using my muscles and relaxed, waiting for the motion to stop.

"Uuhh, I feel sick from this spinning. If I relax and face upwards I'll be able to stabilize."

While dangling I turned my face upwards, my head slowly lowered itself, I pulled my jaw backwards and naturally used the strength in my abdominal muscles to raise my upper body.

Supported by the waist harness, I remained for some time in a relaxed posture looking up at the sky.

"Aah, the sky's so bluee."

The scattered clouds and blue sky. At the end of this view there was the towering cliff and flying in the sky snakes and flocks of bees.

Relaxed in this way, looking up at the sky was actually fun.

"A journey to find sceneries in OSO sounds like it would be interesting. Finding your own special spot."

"You're right. Want to go to some unexplored area then?"

"Even if we party up, you'll bring me to battle some boss anyway, right?"

No way, I don't want healing I need to go through carnage for. When I said that and received "what a shame" in response I noticed I've been spoken to from the side.

Eh? Why am I having a normal conversation here? And so I turned my face towards the voice and saw Taku and Ivan with their arms folded, smiling in my direction.

"Hey, since when are you here!"

"You noticed really late. We've been here for a few minutes. We were looking at you as you space out alone."

Uwahh, I've been seen as I laze around on balance training.

I somehow tried to excuse myself and hurriedly moved my hands but because of that my body's centre of gravity was disturbed and I started to rotate.

"Hya-wawaah! S-stop it!"

"Aa-aah. What are you doing really, Yun."

"Missy, since balance training means maintaining one state it seems like you have progressed, but you're lacking composure."

Ivan also turned towards me as I panicked and made a cool assessment, but I couldn't afford to bother with it.

As I went st〜oop〜it〜, Taku had held down my head with both hands. Although I was grateful to Taku I was looking upside-down at, but why head?

"Want help getting down?"

"No, I can get down myself so it's fine. Let go of my head. Don't hold it so firmly."

Taku quietly let go of my head with his hands and made sure I maintained my attitude. I slowly raised my upper body, grasped the rope, loosened the knot and put my feet on the ground.

Feeling a great sense of security when my feet touched the ground, I let out a breath of relief.

"Missy's improving fast, too."

"S-so, how was it on your side?"

Although I was embarrassed showing myself in unsightly manner, I asked the two as if nothing happened.

"We beat some Aero Snakes up there. Ivan's amazing! He climbed without any tools!"

"Cause rope being here gets in the way. Also, even if there's the lifeline I'm not used to handling weapons so there's less accidents if I use my bare hands and blunt weapons."

"That's somehow convincing."

Since old man Ivan wasn't used to the game, rather than swing a sword around it was better for him to perform a lariat on someone with those arms or swing a stick on someone, judging from his looks the impact would be huge. And, it would easily break opponent's bones.

"But, after climbing up what I learned is that the footing is unstable and it's hard to put any strength into an attack."

"Seems impossible for me. My weapon is a bow used with both hands. If there's anything I can use, it would be a kitchen knife in place of a dagger."

I didn't know if it was possible to aim properly with the bow while leaving my body to the rope, it seemed like it would be hard to control the recoil.

"Taku, you better protect me."

"Yun, aren't you relying others your for your own gain here?"

"The right person in the right place. I'll take care of recovery with potions and mining the ore."

"Gahahaha, Lad, you're being relied on by Missy so protect her well!"

Ivan hit Taku's back with his thick arm, to which Taku responded with a voice of protest feeling a big impact and pain. I was slightly concerned with the nuance to what Ivan said, but I still chuckled seeing them act like that.

"Then come Missy, we'll climb up and pick up ore where's shallow, I'll try to pick up some too within my sight's range."

"If Yun's going on the cliff, I'll go to the forest and fight some mobs and collect items."

Saying so, the two started moving. Geez, those two are acting too free, I've seen them off with a smile and with a delay, started preparing to climb the cliff.

Just as I've been taught by Ivan, I secured my body with equipment and using the rope and stakes for safety I slowly climbed up.

I climbed up for a while and when I arrived in front of a mining point in middle of the cliff, I took out the small pickaxe and struck the point.

Since I couldn't swing using my entire body like usual, I carefully broke the rocks little by little before catching one breaking off ore that spilled out before I dug again.

Although the amount of ore that can be found in the mining points at the cliff-side in each point was smaller than normal, the amount of points themselves was large.

Going back and forth on the very edge of entering the places patrolled by mobs, I was able to collect a decent amount of ore.

"Phew, I got quite a lot. But, If I'm careless and drop them it seems I could injure someone."

I need to be careful as not to drop them when I'm mining, when I carved these words in my mind Ivan had returned.

"You've really started looking the part, missy. Like this, you should be able to get to the cave together with the Lad."

"I said, stop calling me 'missy'. Also, show me the ore you picked up, I'll give them a look."

Since I had the 【Craftsmanship】 Sense, I used its effect to appraise the ore.

I sorted the ore I received from Ivan, but since some fell to the ground their quality and number wasn't all that good.

"There are 5 Fine Iron Ore and twenty of 20 of normal Iron Ore, also 13 Silver Ore. The rest are normal stones, what about them?"

"I can use them for throwing so leave them for me."

"Got it."

After appraising his, I proceeded to appraise my own ore.

Apparently the gems didn't appear in the northern area. Like this I won't be able to secure the material for Magic Gems. Thinking so, I appraised them one after another.

"I need iron and silver for making arrows so I'm happy to get that. Also, for making accessories, too."

"Oh, what kind of accessories do you sell, missy?"

"I'm not selling any. It's purely a hobby of mine."

Since my main is polishing for making Magic Gems and Enchant Stones, at most I can make accessories for killing time, I answered and continued to appraise the many ore I picked up.

What I dug up were 12 pieces of Fine Iron Ore, 34 of normal Iron Ore and 21 pieces of Silver ore, I had a higher ore rate than Ivan.

120 pieces of iron. 97 pieces of silver. 55 pieces of blurite. 35 pieces of black iron. Oh, another one, 36th piece of black iron. And, it turned out that all I have picked up from mining was ore.

"——Black Iron Ore is very tough from what I heard, but it's my first time hearing about Blurite Ore."

Since I could only work with iron using my furnace, it was an ore I haven't worked with at all.

How is hit handled, I wondered but, let's consult with Magi-san next time, I concluded and stowed the ore in the inventory.

•

"Yun, I'm back, how was it?"

"Welcome back, Taku. I got quite a lot of ore."

Taku returned after hunting mobs in the forest. He looked as if he has been smashing mobs with all he had as he returned the sword to the sheeth on his back.

"If you've got some ore, how about exchanging some with the herbs I picked up?"

"Sure. Let me take a look."

When Taku listed up the herbs he had collected in the trade menu, I have put in ore on the displayed menu in the same way and the two of us have exchanged for the materials we wanted.

Although the ore prices were higher than those of herb-type materials, since I received the materials I needed I coloured up the deal a little.

"Yun, is that okay? To trade that Blurite Ore ones and Black Iron ores for this."

"It's fine. Rather, I quite need those herbs."

With that said I executed the trade and took out the items Taku gathered.

There was a bunch of fruit-type food ingredients called 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】 and the item itself felt like it.

Compared to the grapes available on the market, there were very few fruits in each bunch but each one was big and had beautiful shape.

I picked a single piece from the bunch and put it in my mouth, it was a sweet fruit of which skin could be eaten as well.

"Mm! It's sweet!"

"Well, glad you like it."

"This is an ingredient temporarily increasing resistance to confusion and anger. But, as an ingredient, the effect seems weak."

Also, unfortunately the 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】 didn't have seeds, so I couldn't grow them in the 【Atelier】's field.

Taku picked a single piece and threw in his mouth, but finding the grape's sweetness too strong, he scowled. It seemed like it wasn't to his taste.

"Hey, old man Ivan. We should be able to climb up to the cave up there, right."

Hearing Taku's question, Ivan affirmed it.

"Well then, Yun and I want to go to the cave in the middle of that cliff but, won't you join the party and guide us?"

"I don't mind. Then for the time, it might be good to do it at night."

"At night? Why is that?"

"From what I know, the visibility during the night is poor and it's not too suitable for work. So people concentrate on doing dungeons that don't require a light source but——"

"You see, the activity of the enemies that appear on this cliff changes at night. During the day there's many Bunker Bees, at night, a lot of Aero Snakes appear. And, the amount of Aero Snakes appearing still isn't all that large."

"In other words, if all you're doing is climbing, doing it at night is more appropriate."

That's how it is. Ivan confirmed.

"Also, if missy climbs up while gathering ore, it's better to do it when there's fewer enemies, right?"

"C-certainly, overlooking found ore would be a waste but..."

I could easily imagine myself regretting it if I miss ore as I climb. Since there were less enemies, it might be better to take my time gathering.

"Well, speaking of my real intentions, I want you to learn how fun it is to climb at night."

Gahahaha, he laughed heartily.

I thought it would be something like that. I heaved a sigh and smiled bitterly.

That's where mainly Taku and Ivan started to plan the climbing. They set up the climbing order and formation as well as matched the time to climb.

Just, since old man Ivan and Taku couldn't find a time convenient for all of us, it turned out that the start time was pushed to late at night.

"Well, if it's just lad and missy, it shouldn't take as long as until the morning to climb it."

"Looking at it from another perspective, if we continue until the morning..."

Probably they were predicting a pattern where I'll take time mining ore, but, watching sunrise as you climb is one of the mountain's pleasures, Ivan said. He seemed to have a really positive personality.

"So, I guess we're disbanding until night comes? Yun, is all fine on your side?"

"An all-nighter today, huh. Fortunately we've got tomorrow off, so if I prepare dinner now it should be okay, I guess?"

And if I include a nap time into that... as I grumbled under my nose, looks like you'll be fine, said Taku.

Since usually I watch out for my health, playing all night was a rare experience and I a little excited.

After that I logged out and predicting that I won't be able to make tomorrow's breakfast, I prepared food that could be shared between this evening and tomorrow morning.

"OHH?! There's curry today! What meat is there?"

"Today there's beef curry. Also, tomorrow there'll be bread and curry for breakfast, as well as yoghurt."

If it was just baking toasts and warming up a serving of curry, I didn't have to worry about Miu.

"Fresh curry on the first day and ripe one on the second day! Yayy!"

"Yes yes. Also, can I take a bath first today?"

"Fhue, fhai?"

"Don't speak with a spoon in your mouth."

Miu calmly drank some water and asked again.

"That's unusual. Why?"

"I was invited by Takumi to play over the night a little. So I want to enter the bath as soon as possible and take a nap before we start."

"That's really unusual of Onii-chan. You always lead an orderly life so... then, this curry is..."

"Sorry. Tomorrow morning I might not be able prepare anything, so it's an insurance."

When I said that apologetically, I don't really mind, she responded.

"I see, Onii-chan going together with Takumi-san, huh. Today, I have an appointment to go into a dungeon with Sei-oneechan and Mikadzuchi-san, too."

"And Lucato with the others?"

When I asked about Lucato and others who are usually with Miu, she smiled wryly.

"Everyone seems busy. Well, there are times like this too. Also, since it overlaps with the test period in their schools they can't log in. Being under parent's watch sure is tough."

"No, Miu, you study too. Even if our school's test period's over, you shouldn't slack off."

I stared intently at Miu, but she only responded with "help me out if I'm in a pinch", causing me to heave a sigh.

I'll probably have to help her, along with Taku, I felt a vague premonition as the time for dinner had come.

And after I finished preparations for playing over night, in the end I didn't take a nap so I resolved myself to sleep tomorrow in the morning as I logged into OSO.

"Yoo, seems like Yun arrived on time."

"You two are early, Taku and old man Ivan."

"A male high-schooler's night is long!"

"A single man's night is long too!"

No, you don't have to act all cool folding your arms. Also, it makes me feel lonely so stop that.

As for the time, it was about the middle of the night, looking into the sky with 【Sky Eyes】 I couldn't see any of the numerous Bunker Bees flying around during the day, but instead saw some figures of Aero Snakes.

"Their number really decreased."

"Well then, let's go. I'll go first, then missy. For the last one, Taku. Protect missy well!"

Saying so Ivan hit Taku's back and went up leading us on the route.

Since our 【Climbing】 Sense's level was relatively low, Ivan went up slowly.

With just ropes Ivan prepared as a lifeline, we climbed until we reached a ledge on the cliff and when our arms felt tired and out of stamina, we left our bodies to the rope and rested our arms a little.

The 【Climbing】 Sense's support had visible markers appear even at night, they had a different colour than mining points visible with 【Sky Eyes】 and 【See-Through】.

From time to time we moved accordingly to Ivan's instructions and dug mining points that were nearby. So that he doesn't get hit by the falling ore Taku overtook me and I mined alone.

We climbed, rested, then climbed again. From time to time I mined ore. As we repeated that our levels increased and the progress speed had slowly increased.

And, at a point in the middle——

"If we climb any higher, enemy will attack us. So, we'll resume climbing after a short break."

After saying so Ivan sat down in a break space in the cliff, resting his limbs.

"I see. So you've dropped down from up there, old man."

"Although you can't see below because it's dark, it's already quite the height from here too."

I looked down from the cliff and Taku had looked above us.

Hearing my words and Taku's, Ivan made a bitter expression, but continued to prepare in the moonlight.

He removed a magic burner on the large break space in the cliff, placed a kettle on it and boiled water. Then while the water was heating up, he put instant coffee powder in three metal cups.

"Hee, so you really drink coffee while mountain climbing."

"Well, of course. Still, its taste is inferior compared to full-fledged coffee, but you can enjoy the atmosphere with this."

Saying so, Ivan passed instant coffee to me and Taku. I received the cup with both hands and leaned with my back against the cliff, then sipped some coffee.

"Bitter..."

"Gahahaha! Well, it's coffee after all! I've got sugar and coffee milk too!"

"Thanks."

After putting in stick-packaged sugar and milk I mixed it in, and it turned into something I could drink.

Drinking something warm I felt relieved and exhaled slowly, then looked up at the sky.

I was entranced by the sight of OSO's artificial moon and starry sky.

I slowly sipped the warm coffee as I looked at the cold, mysterious starry sky. It was a sight impossible to see in the urban area in the *real*.

"Actually it can be seen quite well in midwinter's cold weather. Well, it's good enough for a substitute."

"Are you climbing mountains in the winter too, old man?"

"Yeah, still, it's not full-fledged mountain climbing. I pitch a tent in a camp-ground during the winter and look from there."

Probably as part of a climber's pride, he showed us a screenshot in place of a photo.

It was a photo of starry sky, but there were also a few lines of falling stars in the sky.

"A screenshot of falling stars? Looks pretty."

"So missy likes it. But unfortunately, these aren't falling stars. This is a fixed photo of the star movement made by keeping shutter open. It's a photo of the stars' movement."

Saying so, this is thirty minutes, this one is after an hour, he continued showing us pictures.

From East to West. From bottom to top. The direction the stars moved varied, making it beautiful and interesting.

"In this game you can take a screenshot of a player's view, but you can't take this kind of thing."

As Taku muttered that, Ivan smiled merrily.

"That's why, to me this world is just a high-quality substitute. It's a hobby dependent on weather which uses a lot of physical strength and time, but I still prefer the mountains and the sky of the reality."

Still, I don't intend to reject this game you like, lad and missy. He said.

Ivan who had put everything into his hobby knew ways of enjoying himself kids like us didn't know, honestly, I felt envious.

Well, in my case it was also fun climbing to the top, but I thought climbing like he does was a real thrill.

"I can understand that, but in my case I prefer results."

Taku who continued to repeatedly climb up without experiencing game-like elements was a little tired, but he got his back hit by Ivan.

"Don't worry. Once we go higher, you'll fight enemy even if you don't want to. Of course, in reality you can't fight flying snakes as you climb!"

From here on there's uncharted territory, he said happily and drank the rest of the bitter coffee in the cup as if to incite himself.

"Now, from here on we need to climb with fighting spirit. Lad and missy, time to get serious!"

In front of us, there was the steep cliff. Behind, the darkness of the abyss, there was a struggle in front of us and behind us. I was anxious whether Taku and I could fight under such circumstances.

Since I was unable to attack using my bow even in this darkness, the only way for me to attack was a combination of 【Sky Eyes】 and earth element magic, but I still wondered how will Taku and Ivan fight.

●

We resumed climbing with Ivan going ahead.

After looking up for a while, we found snakes with dark green wings and red pupils wait for us. With wings like those of a bat, the Aero Snakes looked like a tiny limbless Wyvern.

I used my 【Sky Eyes】 night vision performance to scout.

"Enemy's approaching! Two snakes from upper right. Another two from upper left!"

"I'll drop down a few ahead! Taku lad, protect missy!"

After I said a warning as a scout, Ivan spoke instructions and immediately took posture for interception.

Ivan daringly let go of the rope and with just the one tied to his body and a footing to support him, he took out his weapon.

It wasn't the metal stock attached to his waist, but a claw attached to a rope.

The claw rotated in the dark soundly, quickly increasing its speed.

"There!!"

And when the Aero Snake entered the range of lantern's light, he threw the claw.

The flying metal had its power increased by centrifugal force as it grazed the Aero Snake, the rope following it entangled around the mob and with the claw as a weight, it had collided with the rock wall.

A single snake fell down the cliff and gradually disappeared, but three remaining ones have come attacking. Ivan pulled out the stock from the belt at his waist and expanded it, then as it passed by, he hit one snake. Then, he clenched the rope and hit another one with his fist as if to crush it.

One of the Aero Snakes has slipped by Ivan who had immediately defeated three of them and had approached me baring its fangs but——

"——I won't let you. 《Sonic Edge》!"

Taku who was below me swung his long sword in unstable posture and with a slash, cut off the snake's head and wing.

Since he still wasn't as familiar with it as Ivan was, he gripped the rope with his left hand, so he could only hold the weapon in his right.

"All right! Missy, are there any other enemies?!"

"Wait a moment... yup, it's all right. There's none approaching!"

I told the two that the surroundings are safe.

Ivan repeatedly beat the enemies efficiently by using equipment adapted to fighting on the cliffs and Taku continued to use long-range Art.

The attacks from Aero Snakes were sporadic and since they weren't all that strong, it was great that the battles weren't too long.

The number of enemies was small, possibly because the respawn timer was long, and even during mining the ore I haven't been attacked a single time thanks to which we were able to climb without missing ore collection.

"Hey, old man Ivan, how did you choose your weapons?"

"What's this, out of the blue."

"It's pure curiosity."

And in the middle of climbing, even though it was necessary to concentrate on climbing I relaxed myself, starting a little chat. It might have been because my 【Climbing】 Sense's level had increased.

"Let's see. Using remodelled tools I'm familiar with was more efficient, and also there's romance in it."

The claw with rope is used for putting up tents, the contracting metal stock can be used instead of a walking stick for hiking, it seemed like there were lots of useful things.

"That sounds similar to me using a kitchen knife instead of a dagger."

"No, aren't you two weird?"

" "Why?" "

Taku had retorted from below us, but neither Ivan and I understood it and were puzzled.

Certainly, having a dagger properly made as a dagger had more stable performance and durability, but since Ivan and I used it for crafting and hobby Senses their performance was secondary, as long as we could use them as weapon, it was fine to us.

"Haa, a gamer like me is too different from a hobbyists to understand them, eh."

Heaving a sigh, Taku gave up.

"Taku. New enemies appeared. This time there are three on the right, two on the left and one in front making six total."

While the morning sun still hasn't shown itself, Ivan and Taku accurately handled the snakes.

As we slowly climbed, I also proceeded collecting ore.

"It's almost time it dawns."

"Eh, is that so?"

When I checked the time in menu, it was still four o'clock.

"Missy, it's not autumn's long night, it's before dawn in OSO. Since the enemy's distribution slowly changed before dawn, we'll be increasing pace as we climb up."

"Got it."

I gave up on gathering ore and focus on climbing.

For a while we have climbed the cliff and then turned towards the ascending sun. After we confirmed the sunrise in OSO, an abnormal noise had reached our ears.

**BZZZ* *BZZZZZZZZ* *BZZzz*——*

The bass sound resounding deep in my belly had gradually approached from the bottom.

"What's this soun——"

It was a black mass that appeared to have been blown out of the forest.

The sounds of wings' buzz had approached the cliff in a group.

"Are these Bunker Bees? We can't fight in here!"

"Yun! Light up an 【Insect Repelling Incense】!"

Responding to Taku's instruction I took out an 【Insect Repelling Incense】 and ignited it, then spread smoke all around.

The black mass gathering in our direction had moved away to avoid the white smoke, breaking into two large lumps.

And in the swarm, we saw one remarkably big bee.

"......?!! H-huge!"

The compound eyes of the big bee shone with emerald green colour, the edges of the eyes also shone with beautiful green. As we were projected in its emerald pupils, something had popped out from the bee's butt.

"Ow!"

"Yun, you okay?!"

I frowned and looked at the hurting place. My left arm was pierced with a thick black cone. The arm struck with a needle was spitting out purple liquid and spouting smoke from the hurt point. I hurriedly pulled out the needle in the middle of pungent odour that hurt even my eyes, and assaulted by sickness similar to heartburn, I opened the menu to confirm my state.

"Bad status——and it's 【Poison 4】, too."

As 1% of my HP was reduced per second, I sprinkled a highly-effective Antidote Potion on my left arm, then gulped down a High Potion.

When both the bad state and damage dealt went away, I once again turned towards the enemy.

"What's with this one, doesn't look like a normal Bunker Bee.'

"This is Bunker Bee's boss. Queen Bunker Bee."

"Lad, missy! This place isn't good for this! Let's climb while this smell's effect remains!"

Ivan increased the climbing pace he was matching with ours all at once and raised up.

To keep up with him, I moved after his traces and when I turned around to confirm the bees aren't coming closer because of 【Insect Repelling Incense】's scent, a stinger had pierced the cliff right beside my face.

"Hihh?!"

"Yun! More of stingers are coming! Hurry up and climb!"

Hurried by Taku from below, I desperately climbed.

"Missy, you're almost there!"

Ivan who climbed ahead and confirmed the safety of the space in front of the cave had peeked down at us. After climbing desperately for a little longer, I rolled as to avoid a stinger shot by the queen.

Taku pulled himself up on the rope dropped down by Ivan and we all safely arrived in front of the cave.

"That was close! A poison needle hit right beside my face!"

"Calm down, Yun. Fortunately, apart from the first blow the hit rate was quite low."

In response to Taku's words I calmed my still-pounding heart and clearly confirmed the appearance of the bees bathed in the rising sun's light.

The 【Insect Repelling Incense】's effect had disappeared and a flock of Bunker Bees had surrounded the queen.

"Hey, we've got a cave behind us, how about we escape?"

" "No escaping!" "

"Ah, is that so..."

My best friend and the old man joyfully faced the swarm of bees. Both of them had a boyish sparkle in their eyes.

"No way I'm gonna escape from a rare enemy! Let's beat it and get a rare material!"

"This is great fortune to meet them here! I'll have a showdown with the bees that pushed me down off the cliff!"

The gamer and the hobbyist seemed to brim with the will to fight. Escaping alone is no good I guess. I thought with distant look in my eyes.

"So, lad. Defeating those bees one by one to drag out that queen isn't too good an idea, right."

"That kind of mobs turn into a disorderly crowd when the boss is gone. So, we better aim straight at the boss! Yun, buff us and decrease the number of bees in the surroundings!"

"Got that! 《Enchant》——Attack, defence!"

Their speed was too high for confronting them in such a small place, adding an accident factor. I put on double enchants on the two, strengthening them.

If possible I wanted to weaken the queen with Cursed, but my visibility was blocked by the flock of bees and it was impossible for me to see her with 【Sky Eyes】.

Taku and Ivan who were strengthened by enchant have intercepted the incoming adds, protecting me who was in the back.

And, when the queen's poison needle had come from the swarm of bees, at times they avoided it and at other times they parried with their weapons.

As soon as the delay time was over, I shot an Art dispersing the bees.

"——《Bow Skill – Gust of Wind》!"

I shot an arrow with bow's Art that had a large area of effect using wind pressure straight into the centre of the bee swarm. Bees wobbled in the air pushed away by the pressure and fell down the cliff.

The queen hidden in the centre had appeared for an instant, but was soon hidden by bees again.

Although the queen also seemed to have received damage from my Art, but as expected of a rare boss mob, she endured without wobbling in the air.

"Yun, shoot one more time!"

"Shooting now! ——《Bow Skill – Gust of Wind》!"

The arrow accompanied by wind pressure had once again blown away the bee adds.

With that timing, Ivan threw the rope with claw attached and captured the queen's body.

Ivan held out in a tug of war against a bee as big as a child.

The queen desperately resisted, moving her wings at high speed in order not to be dropped down to the ground.

Like a growl from an engine's rotational speed increasing the wings' buzzing had gotten louder, on the other hand Ivan clenched his teeth and pulled the rope with his both hands.

"Old man, hold out a little longer! Yun, continue decreasing the number of bees!"

"Hurry up! I won't hold out long!"

Ivan lowered his waist and desperately endured the tug of war against the queen, she started to slowly drag him down.

I shot one 《Bow Skill – Gust of Wind》 after another, decreasing the number of bees. And, as the amount of hate value towards me increased, they changed their target to me.

Taku stood in front of me and holding two long swords he continued to cut down one after another.

Once their numbers decreased, I could finally see the queen with 【Sky Eyes】.

"GOo! 《Cursed》——Attack, defence, speed!"

I put on cursed for physical attack, physical defence and speed on the queen, weakening her.

The physical attack curse was resisted, but with physical defence and speed reduced, the hum of her wings weakened.

With that the balance in tug of war had inclined towards Ivan, in order not to miss this opportunity he did his best, which made his muscles seem to swell to bursting.

"——Ccoome onnnn!"

Wrapping the rope on his shoulder and back as, he pulled it all at once.

The queen dragged by the rope in a posture like that of a shoulder throw had fallen in front of us.

"I've been waiting for this moment!"

The bee that crashed in front of us tried to escape using her six legs as she fired the stingers randomly.

Although it seemed like she was aiming at Taku who rushed in, when he avoided it had nearly hit me, but I used 【Sky Eyes】 to stretch experienced time and avoided in an instant.

"——《Fifth Breaker》!"

The series of five attacks delivered by Taku in an instant have damaged the queen's outer shell, giving her significant damage.

The queen's HP was significantly scraped off with every blow, turning to zero with the fourth one. But, as the Art couldn't be stopped after triggering, the fifth slash had delivered an overkill damage.

She had let out a cry of agony that sounded like scraping of metal and the adds scattered all at once hearing it.

Although the queen could certainly be called intimidating, but being beaten down by Taku's excessive attacks, I felt sympathetic to her.

"Phew, as expected, this middle-aged man's body did bear it despite the lost health."

"You okay, old man?"

I called out to Ivan who had sat down, but he only glanced at me and turned towards the bottom of the cliff.

"No worries. Seeing this scenery, my tiredness is being blown away."

Ahead of his line of sight, there was the forest illuminated by the rising sun.

Morning dew had sparkled reflecting the light of the sun overlooking the forest and ahead of it, spread a grassland extending far towards the small town behind the walls.

We climbed the cliff overnight, battled with enemies and received the items we wanted.

Taku stood next to me, exhausted in a state where his thinking nearly stopped he squinted at the scenery in front of him and the warmth of the sun.

"I can't stop climbing because of this kind of pleasures, you see."

Hearing Ivan mutter that, Taku and I nodded in silence. It felt like we understood a little what's so enjoyable in the mountains.

I took a screenshot of this scenery, stood up and turned towards the cave.

Since we've gone through the hassle of climbing here, we need to conquer this cave at least once and find a portal's transition object... I thought, but as I looked carefully there was something I got bothered by.

"Hey, old man Ivan. Isn't this a tunnel rather than a cave?"

"What? Really, Yun?!"

"You're right. I probably didn't notice because every time I came here it was the night."

I was spoke to Ivan, but Taku was the one who reacted more strongly. When Iwan turned around next he realized it seemed like there was light in the back of the dark cave.

"Yun, let's go take a look! Old man, you too hurry up and come!"

"Geez, wait a moment. Don't rush so much."

"Good grief, young ones sure are energetic."

I heaved a sigh as I chased after Taku who charged towards the dark tunnel.

The tunnel's exit had appeared immediately, Taku's legs naturally accelerated.

Ahead of where I chased after Taku, spread a highland. The land was covered in green and there were animal-type mobs. The fresh morning air indeed seemed like that of a highland.

When I checked the animal-type mobs who were far away with my 【Sky Eyes】, I found cattle and sheep as well as chicken.

"Feels like a highland pasture."

Indeed that was the impression this place gave out.

"I see, a highland area. Another area discovered making me really excited."

While Taku had happily looked around the highland zone, I took a look in the surroundings and found a transition portal by the tunnel's side and was relieved I won't have to climb the cliff that often.

"You're both so energetic, lad, missy. Oh, there's a portal."

Ivan who caught up to us with a delay had found the portal and we registered ourselves with the highland area's transition point.

"What are you two going to do now? I'm going to take a look at the highland area now."

Hearing Taku's proposal I shook my head refusing.

"I'm quite tired so I'll log out now and go to sleep."

"Then, Ivan?"

"Unfortunately, I'm not interested so I'll be going to sleep."

Although he smiled merrily, as expected Ivan couldn't maintain the high spirits from the night and was a little sleepy.

Before logging out there was something I had to consult with the two.

"For the last thing, is equal distribution of ore fine with you?"

Taku and Ivan were with me overnight and thanks to their protection I could gather it. They had the right to getting a share of it.

"I'm fine with that."

"How about Ivan?"

"It's cumbersome, so how about you purchase them from me, missy? I'm not good with the market and I can trust you missy."

"No, we haven't meet too long ago so how can you trust me. Geez."

In response, you probably don't intend to trick me at a time like this do you, Ivan responded pointing it out. Taku too, had laughed in agreement and I glared at the two unable to refute.

"Certainly I can purchase it from you, but since I mined some ore I don't know the price of I'll need time to calculate the price. Also, you'll have to visit my store when I'm there."

"Then keep it as a deposit until you determine the price. Also, since you're telling that to me, it seems like you don't intend to trick me after all. You sure are serious and honest, missy."

"Should I take it as trust towards me, or that you're sloppy. Good grief..."

In that case, I'll need him to come to the 【Atelier】 at a later date. Well, I'll undertake that. I noted down the number of ore and type that was Ivan's part to settle it after consulting.

"Today was fun. Old man, let's party up again if there's opportunity."

"Then bring me some more 【Climbing】 Sense applicants next time. Missy, I'll stop by your store next time!"

"Yeah, I'll wait patiently."

Taku and Ivan did a farewell with their fists and then together with Taku we've seen off Ivan as he logged out.

And then, this time I logged out seen off by Taku, waking up in a bed in the real world I took off the VR Gear and resided in the bed once again.

Chapter 3 - The Magical Furnace and Blurite

A sound of hard metal being struck had echoed inside the 【Atelier】's workshop.

Pouring hot metal from a mould to a mould, I hit it with a hammer, shaping it.

The mass of metal purified from the ore had turned into a lot of Fine Iron Ingots and Iron Ingots. Currently, on the side there was a mountain of ore piled up.

"Phew, for now I was able to turn the iron-type ores into ingots. But what do I do about this."

The heat leaking out of the portable furnace installed in the workshop felt like it was burning my face and I stroked my forehead with the back of my hand to wipe off the sweat.

Beside the Iron Ingots there was Silver Ore, Black Iron Ore and Blurite Ore I didn't work with at all until now.

"I thought Blurite Ore is the same rank materials as iron, but even if I place it in the furnace, it doesn't melt at all."

I tried putting Blurite Ore in the furnace once for an experiment, but probably because heat wasn't enough as it continued to remain in the furnace it had eventually disappeared as a crafting failure.

Although I predicted this was a phenomenon happening when the furnace's performance wasn't enough, there could also be another cause of failure so I put out the furnace's fire immediately.

Feeling that a portable furnace is already insufficient for crafting equipment, I decided to upgrade it.

Still, since I didn't know how should I get a new one, I decided to rely on a senior crafter.

"——And so, please tell me where can I purchase a furnace."

"Yun-kun, to think you still used a portable furnace, Onee-san is a little shocked."

When I visited Magi-san's store, 【Open Sesame】 and asked lowering my head, she muttered amazed as she leaned on her elbow on the counter.

"No, I'm mainly using 【Craftsmanship】 for polishing gems so..."

"Still, since you have money you could purchase decent equipment earlier."

Magi-san made a bitter smile and lightly listened to my circumstances.

"How much firepower do you need, Yun-kun? You can immediately purchase a furnace for changing iron into steel and processing Silver Ingots, but any more than that and it gets troublesome."

"Right now, the ore I can't process is Silver Ore and Black Iron Ore. Also, there's the Blurite Ore item I can't handle at all."

I took out sample of each ore and put them in front of Magi-san.

The reason I came to consult Magi-san was to consult the purchase of a furnace with a top crafter, but also to ask about Blurite Ore I couldn't handle.

"This is... show it to me for a little."

Magi-san narrowed her eyes, turning her expression to a serious one. She lifted the ore and looked at it from various angles.

After observing the ore with blue metal for long enough, she turned towards me.

"Yun-kun. Where did you get this?"

"I mined it along the mountain area located in the north. Did you know about this ore, Magi-san?"

"Yes, I'm occasionally brought one or two. I certainly did hear its mined in the northern area but..."

Did something happen that she speaks so uncomfortably? When I wondered that, Magi-san opened her mouth heavily.

"Could tell me specifically where did you get it?"

"Yeah, it's not really a hidden area. It's just that you need to mine it by climbing that mountain's cliff."

"C-climbing a cliff you say..."

It just so happened that I acquired 【Climbing】 Sense and was digging the mining points at the cliff as we climbed. There wasn't too

many Blurite Ores when I dug under the cliff, but the closer to the top I was the number of Blurite Ore I mined had increased.

"Haa, you sure are aggressive, Yun-kun."

"No, I was just swept with course of events."

I didn't intend to deny that I moved quite actively, but it was to the extent where I thought positively about the fact my means of mining ore had increased, so it was not a mistake.

"I-it's fine about me already. Magi-san knowing Blurite Ore saves me time. Actually, I need to decide the price for it..."

When I said so, Magi-san went "aaah" and made a strange expression. Why did Magi-san who purchased it before react like that?

"You see. Actually I can't decide on the price of Blurite Ore either."

"Eh, Magi-san can't?"

"Certainly I did buy the Blurite Ore that was brought to me, but I wasn't successful in refining it into an ingot yet. That's why, when I purchase it I pay three times the price of Black Iron Ore."

When it was first brought my furnace's performance wasn't enough, then I didn't have the technology to do it, not high enough level, not enough firepower... and so, I'm now in a situation where I'm waiting to gather up enough ore to make an ingot, she said.

That's where a single question for Magi-san had appeared in my mind.

"Um, but Magi-san should have the Making Box, right. Couldn't you get the number required by using it's duplication feature?"

The Making Box was one of the rewards from the summer camp event, the functions aimed for the crafters were a delivery of a random item every day and duplication of a specified item.

Since I selected the same rewards I remembered about it, but I thought Magi-san could use random delivery or item duplication to align the ore...

"Aah, that. I'm in the middle of duplicating another rare ore I got from random delivery so I can't use it for this one."

Ahahaha, Magi-san laughed dryly. It seemed like it can't be helped.

"In that case I'll deposit all the Blurite Ore I have."

"Ehh?! But, this would put you in a loss."

"I can go and pick up more so it's fine. Also, I can't use it yet anyway."

To me, who had a furnace which could only process iron, this was a useless treasure. That's why, I wanted to make sure of the Blurite Ore's value even if I had to hand it over to Magi-san to learn it.

"Uuu, I'm still unconvinced."

"I only want to know what would be the reasonable price for Blurite Ore, so don't mind it."

"...I get it."

Although she was still dissatisfied with my words closed her eyes and muttered quietly.

"If I settled with this situation all content, it would be a disgrace to me as a top crafter! Therefore, I'll present an exchange condition to you, Yun-kun!"

"Exchange condition?"

"That's right. Yun-kun will provide me with Blurite Ore. I will make equipment with that Blurite Ore and pass it to Yun-kun. Of course, for free."

How about it? As Magi-san tilted her head inquiring, I accepted without any objections.

"I understand. Then please do that. I'll pass the Blurite Ore to you in that case."

Saying so, I left 47 pieces of Blurite Ore with Magi-san. It was enough for making 9 ingots. If it goes well, she'll be able to make at least one ingot.

"So, contract established. But before that, we have to purchase a furnace for you."

"Yeah, speaking of which..."

I've gotten caught up in the Blurite Ore's price problem and forgotten about it.

"We'll go buy it immediately, but there are two choices I recommend."

After we left 【Open Sesame】 Magi-san spoke as we walked towards the NPC selling furnaces, she raised two fingers as she explained.

"First, there's the Blast Furnace that can stably process gold and silver as well as black iron. Normally, you would eventually purchase it by raising a grade for each stage, but since you have money Yun-kun, I think you can immediately buy it."

A higher level Blast Furnace was impossible to carry like a mobile furnace and had to be installed inside a workshop, but the performance was guaranteed.

"That sounds good enough to make accessories."

"True. The other one, is a furnace that can process magical metal. It's called the Magical Furnace."

This one was also a crafting equipment that required installation like the Blast Furnace, but had different features from the Blast Furnace.

"The Magical Furnace can temporarily increase the firepower by using player's MP. On the other hand, if MP expires in middle of crafting and firepower decreases suddenly the crafting fails."

The Blast Furnace which had more stable performance or the Magical Furnace that had higher performance but was harder to handle.

From the two Magi-san had proposed I choose——

"Better too big than to small, they say——I guess the Magical Furnace."

"As I thought. Then, you'll have to do your best with the quest."

"Eh, that's..."

What did she mean? I tried asking, but Magi-san had entered a building at the town's outskirts.

I followed after her in a hurry and inside the building I felt a breathless because of the steaming, hot air inside the building.

"Yun-kun, the bricklayer NPC here sells the Blast Furnace and Magical Furnace."

"Welcome. Do you need bricks?"

The one who appeared was a rugged male NPC with an apron dirty with mud. As I looked up at the man with square features, he left the scoop he held in his hands to mix clay and had turned in our direction.

"Um... I want a Magical Furnace that can process magical metals."

"Sorry. Magical Furnace is made of the special-made bricks and we don't have materials for those."

The rugged man lowered his eyebrows as made an apologetic look. I wondered what to do and turned my gaze towards Magi-san for hlep, who nodded with a smile.

Should it continue like this?

"However, if you bring in the materials it will be possible to make it. I'll tell you where you can find the material."

"Ah, so that's it. I accept then."

——【Quest: Look for Fine Magical Clay Balls】 has been accepted.

Gather 30 of the quest item, 【Fine Magical Clay Balls】

I opened the map that appeared along when the quest was accepted and checked the location. It seemed that there were several places to pick up the quest item around the First Town.

"You can gather 3〜4 clay balls in each place. Bring them to me once you gathered the required number."

After saying so, the Bricklayer NPC turned his back towards us and started kneading the clay in brick kiln in front of him.

"Thank you for guiding me, Magi-san."

"Well then, that's it for my guidance. I'll go try my hand with Blurite Ore, so you do your best too, Yun-kun."

I've seen off Magi-san who went on the road to 【Open Sesame】 waving me goodbye and motivated myself.

"Still, I'm used to walking around the first town, so there's no need to worry."

It seems like it'll be laid-back gathering no different from the usual picnics and walks.

Therefore I called out companions for my stroll.

"Now, let's go! Ryui, Zakuro——《Summon》!"

I summoned my partner young beasts, unicorn Ryui and two-tailed black fox, Zakuro.

"Now, let's gather some items as well walk around like usual!"

I stroked summoned Ryui's and Zakuro's neck and brought the two on a walk outside the town.

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While collecting the quest item 【Fine Magical Clay Balls】 I also collected various other items on the way.

Branches required for arrows and gemstones as well as herbs. Making a little detour I also gathered rare herbs from a secluded location as I steadily collected clay balls.

"Phew, I've gathered two thirds of the required clay balls. But, I'm a little tired so let's take a break."

Locating the places I could collect clay balls from was easy, but digging under the ground to gather it required quite a lot effort.

I dug the layers of clay which had exactly the same hue as the ground in surroundings up to thirty centimetres deep and then I formed a clay balls of a basketball size with my own hands.

Making two, three of them and putting them in the inventory was quite tiring.

I gathered it as I moved from the eastern are towards the southern area and once I entered the safety area on the west's side area I decided to sit down and rest a little under a tree's shade.

"Haa, Ryui, stop putting your heads on top of my knees like usual. Also Zakuro, why are you trying to enter such a narrow place?"

I stroked Ryui who requested a lap pillow and Zakuro who tried to enter my clothes from my side and meanwhile, I looked for some food in my inventory which would match the mood.

"Today's mood... ahh, there's 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】."

I took out the grapes Taku found in the woods in the northern mountainside area.

When I put in one mouth, sweet juice spread inside.

I took a few from the bunch and gave to Zakuro since he rose on his hind legs and seemed to want some, he started to eat it along with the skin.

"Normally grapes are bitter if eaten without peeling skin, but I guess it saves effort to eat them along with the skin."

I picked another one and put it in my mouth.

Since I was distracted with Zakuro for a moment, when I felt the weight on my lap lighten and turned towards Ryui, I saw him eat entire bunch of grapes.

"Wooah, what's with that lavish eating?! Is it really fine to eat it by bunch?!"

I retorted in response to the sight, but Ryui continued to chew only spitting out the stems.

He cleanly only ate the fruits.

"Aaa-aah, and I still haven't eaten myself."

And I wanted to eat some more of them. I felt depressed, but the small fox froze as he gulped grapes down.

"...Zakuro. It's fine, you can eat the rest of them."

I picked the remaining grapes from the bunch and heaved a sigh quietly.

It's not like grapes are that unusual, why did Ryui eat them up all at once, I wondered and the answer I ended up with was that we haven't eaten any fruits recently.

"It can't be helped. After we gather up the quest items let's go to the northern area and search for 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】."

One more push, I slapped my own cheeks lightly and resumed clay ball gathering.

In the western area nearby the shallow cave which was bat habitat, near the pond I dug up clay balls and finished their collection. Then, I headed to search for 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】 in the north.

"Ryui, hide yourselves with illusion like usual and protect Zakuro. We'll avoid combat as much as possible."

I gave instructions to Ryui in front of the northern forest and started to walk inside carefully.

Using my armour's 【Recognition Inhibition】 additional effect I advanced so that we're not found by enemy mobs.

"Although it's just ore at the cliff, there's a lot of gemstones in the forest. Although there's few herbs, seems like a lot of food ingredients can be found here."

From the food items other than 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】, I found 【Mountain Apple】 which resembled an apple, a blue fruit similar to a plum 【Shiyu Fruit】 and 【Tou Fruit】 which had a sweet fragrance similar to that of an apricot.

【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】 was easy to pick up because the fruits are hanging in a low position, but the other trees were tall and picking them up seemed difficult...

"Should I drop them with the bow? But I'd rather not, fruits will be hurt."

Maybe I should just pick up what's within the range of my reach, I thought, but recalling that I had 【Climbing】 Sense I equipped it and climbed the trees thanks to motion assist in order to pick fruits.

"I forgot about this Sense since I got it just recently. Now, let's go look for the next one!"

The four kinds of fruits each provided a resistance to different bad statuses, 【Shiyu Fruit】 improved resistance to Poison and Charm, 【Tou Fruit】 resistance to Paralysis and Stun, 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】 resistance to Confusion and Anger. And 【Mountain Apple】 correspondingly improved Curse and Sleep resistance.

If only could I grow these on my field, I thought and tried to look for seeds in the fruits, but I was unable to get any. Instead, I located a small tree called 【Shiyu's Seedling】 and scooping it out from the ground I succeeded in putting it in my inventory.

Although I did walk around looking for the seedlings of three other fruit trees, but since I could only find a single 【Shiyu's Seedling】 I resolved myself to come here occasionally to search.

"Phew, I guess this is enough?"

Since every time I found fruits Ryui and Zakuro requested a taste of them, rather than searching it had turned into something like fruit hunt for Ryui and Zakuro.

In addition to gathering clay balls I went fruit picking, since I did quite a lot of field work, it's about time I go back, when I decided that a bright red colour had appeared in front of me.

Speaking of red colour in the northern forest, it would be 【Mountain Apples】 so I decided to return and complete the quest after picking the apples.

When I proceeded in the direction of the red colour I exited to a small, open area.

Lined up in there, were trees covered in red flowers. The flower petals were half-open like a bowl. And then, the entire flowers fell down from the tree.

Under my feet spread lots of those flowers, still maintaining their shape.

"So this is the safety area, right. Also I feel like I've heard of 'Whole-falling flowers' before..."

Zakuro walked through the flowers composed and Ryui had fearfully bounced around as not to step on them.

I walked checking up one tree after another as I searching my memory.

"I feel like I've seen this recently. Where was it again."

"Oh right. It resembles a diagram for a material I extracted from this book."

I took out the book from inventory and opened the relevant page.

"Is this the 【Double Camellia】? If so, by squeezing out its seeds I should be able to get oil."

Although it was supposed to have camellia fruits, I couldn't find anything similar to seeds in them, I could only find some broken off seeds from time to time. However, their number was small.

"Means I can't gather large amounts of seeds so easily, huh."

And, as I walked between the trees with camellia flowers on them, I stepped on something hard.

What was that, I looked at my feet and saw a hard seed of a golf ball's size.

Hidden by 【Double Camellia】's flowers there was a fallen seed.

"It's darkest under the lamp post, they say."

I picked up the camellia seed and started collecting the seeds that fell nearby. Looking at it mystified Zakuro tried imitating me and brought a seed in his mouth, but not knowing the use of the seeds he bit on it while tilting his head.

"Thanks, Zakuro. If we collect lots of these, I'll make oil."

I opened the book and confirmed the diagram for squeezing out oil and its applications.

【Double Camellia's Oil】 could be used for both Mixing and Cooking, moreover the draff could be used for a fertilizer in the field.

"Also 【Double Camellia's Oil】 is the base material for ointment."

According to the recipe for making an ointment for wounds and cream, oil, water and a stabilizer third material were used for the base cream.

Among the materials, 【Double Camellia's Oil】 was used for oil and 【Water of Life】 for water, but the stabilizer material was still missing.

In the book it said a sumac wax squeezed out of a certain plant was used, but unfortunately no material came to my mind.

"...but sumac wax, a wax huh. If I'm not wrong honeycomb wax was also a material for candles."

When I gathered the camellia seeds as I was thinking, before I realized lots seeds were gathered by my feet.

Since Zakuro happily waved his two tails, I pat his head as a thanks and recovered the seeds he brought.

"It can't be helped even if I stay here and think endlessly, so let's go back for now. Ryui, Zakuro, we're going."

I patted the two animals who ran up to me in response to my voice and without any detours, we headed straight back to the First Town.

And, we stopped by the Bricklayer NPC's store located in the outskirts, reporting the quest.

"I finished collecting clay balls for the quest!"

"I see. I can make a Magical Furnace with this. The making of the furnace and installing will cost 1.2mG, when should I begin work?"

"Umm, I don't have the money with me, so please come to the 【Atelier】 first and confirm the location for installing in the workshop part before starting."

"Understood. Let's go then."

I passed all the clay balls I had and being able to purchase the Magical Furnace, I brought the Bricklayer NPC with me and returned to the 【Atelier】.

After exchanging greetings with Kyouko-san the NPC I guided the Bricklayer NPC to the back of the store, then after conveying my request as for the installation I paid the costs of the furnace.

"Well then, near the furnace's location put down a magic barrier to prevent the hot air spreading in the entire room, noted."

"Since I got other materials for Mixing you know. Also, I don't want to take a break in a hot room."

"Understood. I'll start working with this for the time being."

But, the craftsman who was about to return to his store to begin the installation of the Magical Furnace had dropped a bomb as he was leaving.

"The installation of the furnace will take three days. Meanwhile, it will be impossible to enter here."

"Hee? No, it's first time hearing this, that'd be troubling."

The Bricklayer NPC left the 【Atelier】 before I could respond. No way, has construction work already started? As I put my hand on the door of the workshop part of the store a message saying 【Entrance Prohibited】 had appeared.

"...Kyouko-san, do we have enough in stock for three days?"

When I asked the Kyouko-san who was tending to the store, she answered with a smile that it's all right, making me feel slightly relieved.

"But it's still troubling. If I can't mix a base cream then..."

No, but thinking again about it, there was still an option of mixing with the beginner's crafting kit I haven't used for a while.

"...haa, good grief. Well, let's just confirm the recipe works and worry about performance improvement later."

For now, in order to proceed with preparation of the base cream I took out the book and started squeezing out oil out of 【Double Camellia】's seeds while consulting the method with the recipe.

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"Hmm. I made a stabilizer for the time being, but it looks somewhat poorly."

I sniffed it, but the smell that had come from the green stabilizer placed in front of me was far from what could be called refreshing.

Two days have passed since then. Until the installation of the Magical Furnace completes I slowly dried the 【Double Camellia's Seeds】 under the 【Atelier】's eaves and on the wooden deck facing towards the field, I worked on the stabilizer with the materials I had.

The material I used as for the stabilizer was 【Bark of the Fragrant Moss Wood】 which was the material for 【Insect Repelling Incense】 and using that, I proceeded with extracting the stabilizer.

I boiled a large amount of 【Bark of the Fragrant Moss Wood】 in hot water for more than thirty minutes.

As I stirred it dyeing water with the moss wood, eventually all of the water had been stained by the green moss and something like oil started to slowly appear floating on the surface. Once I boiled it for a long time it had become a thick layer of oil and the remnant of the moss and bark was swimming inside the pot.

Then, I took the pot from on top of fire and waited for it to cool down slowly.

With the use of the difference in temperature between water, oil and the stabilizer, I waited for the green solid on the surface——【Moss Wax】 to solidify.

Finally I took out the green mass, and throwing away the remaining water, oil, moss and bark I secured a certain amount of 【Moss Wax】, but the grassy smell didn't disappear.

"I should have asked Lyly about a suitable material for making wax."

Lyly the woodworker should know about a stabilizer material for making wax or varnish for polishing the surface of bows and staffs, I thought. What should I do, I wondered.

"I have cometh! Hey, what are you doing?"

When I was checking the texture of the prepared wax, the Mischievous Fairy had come to play.

"Welcome. There are sweets prepared in the back."

"Yayy! Well then, have this in exchange."

The Mischievous Fairy who visited from time to time had placed a small pot full of honey on the table and flew towards the store to pick up some sweets.

"Geez, so energetic."

"Yahoo! Candies today!"

Apple-flavorued and grape-flavorued candies were something I made by mixing juice squeezed out of fruits I collected recently, sugar and water. I decided to use 【Shiyu Fruit】 and 【Tou Fruit】 on some other time.

As for the 【Shiyu's Seedling】 and 【Double Camellia】's seed I have had them currently planted inside a planter and was waiting for them to grow.

The Farmer NPC in whose care I am very often said that the 【Shiyu's Seedling】 and 【Double Camellia】's seed will have to grow in a planter for two weeks before they can be re-planted in the field. And, I was told that they will start bearing fruit a month after they are planted in the field, I already had the place to plant them in prepared.

"Mm? Whashiit? Sho 've anyshin on my fashe?"

"No, I just thought that you're eating deliciously."

The Mischievous Fairy put in the candy of a size for humans into her mouth and licked it with her cheek inflated incredibly.

She couldn't speak too well but, What is it? Is there anything on my face? She must have wanted to say. Seeing her like that, a smile appeared on my face.

Although she continued to lick the candy for a while, in the middle of it she had started to chew on it. Once she finally settled down, she flew right in front of me.

"Looks like a strange lump, and it kinda smells."

"I intended to make wax out of a plant. Actually, I'd be glad if I had Beeswax."

"What are you saying. You have Beeswax don't you."

Saying so, the Mischievous Fairy pointed at the honey she brought in.

"I mean, 【Fairy Village's Honey Crown】's pot is made by processing the light and sturdy honeycomb."

"Seriously?"

"Seriously serious I am. There's no way we could carry an ordinary, heavy pot after all."

Use some common sense and you'd realize, hmph. I was a little annoyed by how she snorted, but I felt like I found a new method.

"Well then, next time prepare a cake!"

"No, even if you make a request I won't... heck, she's gone!"

I received a big hint from the free and unrestrained neighbourhood Mischievous Fairy.

Taking out the small pots the Mischievous Fairy had brought in the honey in so far, I checked them.

Certainly, the pot was light and durable. There was a moist texture somewhat different from ceramic.

"All right. Now that I have the prospect of stabilizer, let's prepare the base cream!"

I set up two small pots.

I filled the pots with water and put bowls inside which had a Beeswax and Moss Wax, making them float on hot water.

Since the Beeswax pot was quite big it was somewhat hard to melt it so I smashed it with a hammer first. The Moss Wax was slowly purified as I slowly added fresh water and removed the impurities.

"It's not like I have a beehive. I need to be able to make it with the materials I have access to."

It was important to be able to make it at any time rather than count on rare, high quality items I couldn't make myself.

Meanwhile, since the crushed Beeswax pot had melted turning into big mass, I took it out from the hot water to cool it down.

After removing the impurities for about three times the Moss Wax too, had its colour and grassy smell fade, it had only a light green colour and refreshing scent.

"Since Beeswax didn't have much impurities in the first place, there wasn't much change, huh. And for the Moss Wax, once I got rid of the impurities it doesn't smell so bad."

Rather, since it had refreshing scent of greenery, it might actually be better that way.

"Hmm. Let's make it with both."

I stopped heating up water and crushed the lumps of chilled Beeswax and Moss Wax into several bottles.

"What's left is... oh, a friend call from Taku?"

Next were the large pot for the oil extracted from 【Double Camellia】's seeds and a large amount of water, and when I was preparing a steamer, a friend call had come from Taku.

『"Yun, how are you?"』

"We meet in the school all the time don't we."

『"Haha, I guess. I'm going to drop by your store now, is that fine? I want to talk a little about the highland area in the north."』

"It's fine. I'm in the 【Atelier】 right now."

『"All right, I'll head over right away!"』

It was sudden for him to contact me, but I understood once he spoke about the highland area. Soon, we'll probably go explore that place, I thought and finished preparing the steamer and waited for water to boil.

After I waited for a while, Kyouko-san had guided Taku and the others from the 【Atelier】's store to the wooden deck.

"Welcome. So today Gantz, Minute and the others are with you."

"Yeah, we'll intrude for a little. Still, you have some strange things lined-up."

Following Taku were Gantz, Minute, Mami-san, Kei. Also, the climber Ivan was with them too.

"Eh? This looks like a strange combination. It's old man Ivan."

"Hey, I wanted to see missy's store so I asked Taku lad to guide me."

"Well then, look around freely. We can talk once I finish up with this work."

As Ivan smiled showing his white teeth, feel free, I said, and continued to work in front of Taku and the others who watched it with interest.

When the steamer was filled with steam, I put in dried 【Double Camellia】 seeds in.

"Now, the preparations are finished. Well then, let's talk about the highland area in the north."

Acting as representative for this talk were Taku and Ivan, others were looking around at the Wisteria Peach Tree and herbs in the 【Atelier】's field, or stared at the tools spread on the wooden deck's table that were in middle of processing.

"Simply put, I want to invite you to search in that highland area. Gantz, Minute and the others also seem interested in that area, so before everyone gets the 【Climbing】 Sense, won't you go take a look in there with me, Yun?"

I don't mind but... as I muttered that I turned towards Gantz and others, who responded to me excitedly.

"It's a new area! I want to go there too, but because I don't have the 【Climbing】 Sense I can't go! Why didn't I log in back then, really!"

"Gantz is acting way too excited all alone. But, I am slightly anxious about sending off Taku and Yun-chan alone into an unknown area."

Although appalled about how Gantz clenched his fist saying "I'm envious", Minute worried about us going to the highland area.

"Then, does Ivan teach you about 【Climbing】 Sense all alone?"

Ivan who crossed his arms beside had made a happy smile and shook his head.

"It turned out that my acquaintances who have the 【Climbing】 Senses gathered up and we're going to carry out large-scale study for climbing. I came in order to consult about the items required as preparation for that."

I see, so Taku wanted to invite me to the highland area and Ivan actually had come to seek advice from me and Taku who actually experienced learning about the Sense under him.

First, let's respond Taku——

"I don't mind going to the highland area, but I don't want to search too deeply. If it's light, then sure."

"Sure, leave it to me."

Taku said so all confident, but will it really be fine? I tilted my head puzzled.

Then, I took out a notebook from the inventory and wrote down a several items and a Mixing recipe for Ivan.

"Food and consumables like potions are essential. Also, since Bunker Bees appear in that place they need to light the 【Insect Repelling

Incense】 from this recipe so that bees don't attack them even during daytime. I've written down where each material can be found."

I wrote down things I needed when I was leveling my 【Climbing】 Sense.

If they had acquaintance crafters other than me they should just ask them to prepare a number of those. It would be too much of a burden to provide items for a large number of people studying. In order to reduce the burden on myself even if just a little, I passed him the recipe.

"Is it fine to take this? Aren't crafter's recipes something confidential..."

"First time hearing that. Ah, also, I've checked up on the prices for ore, but since Blurite ore's price is still undecided, want to sell it for slightly more than others?"

For the Blurite Ore I entrusted to Magi-san, following her example I purchased it at a price three times that of Black Iron Ore. Together with the other ore, it all cost quite a lot.

"It's more than enough. But, if you have this much money missy, it seems you can collect the presented items with ease. If it's needed I'll split up with acquaintances to secure materials. Sorry, I'll be in your debt!"

It seemed like Ivan's bussiness was over since after I purchased the ore from him, he left the store early.

After that I discussed the schedule for going to the highland area with Taku and did adjustment.

"Hey, Yun-chan. What is this?"

When I was done discussing with Taku, Gantz had pointed towards the 【Double Camellia】's seeds inside the steamer. Minute also looked at them with interest.

"I guess its an ointment's material? After steaming, I plan to squeeze out the oil from camellia seeds."

Originally I was supposed to crush the seeds whole on the grinding machine in the workshop and then put them into linen cloth and squeeze out, but since I was unable to enter the workshop because of the Magical Furnace's installation, I had to crush them with the hammer used in craftsmanship and squeeze them out.

"Since they're camellia seeds, you mean it's Camellia Oil?"

"I guess so. If I squeeze out the oil I'll get a versatile material that can be used in cooking and mixing. Also, it can be used for medicine. Speaking of which, I guess it could be classified as a cosmetic."

Mami-san had asked puzzled, so I responded confirming it and then took out the steamed seeds so that they cool down slightly.

Meanwhile, Minute had stared at the camellia seeds with her eyes shining.

"Are you saying it can be used for hair and skin?!"

"I wonder? But I guess since its a material for something like a hand cream, there should be no harm."

As the seeds cooled down I checked the ointment recipe using Camellia Oil in the book set aside.

The basic things were ointments and creams, but by changing the recipe it seemed like I could make things like a lip cream.

"Great, this is really great! Since you're squeezing, you need strength! Gantz, come here and use some strength instead of Yun-chan!"

Hearing about item associated with skin care and beauty Minute had grow energetic and struck Gantz back repeatedly.

She did it so powerfully that Taku and Kei had escaped to 【Atelier】's store section.

"Ahh, Taku, Kei! Don't make me a sacrifice and escape!"

Gantz called out to the two who were already gone and tried to escape but Minute had pressed against the nape of his neck with a smile.

"Now, if you're a man, then get to work."

Threatened with a big smile, Gantz had used his fists used for martial arts in order to squeeze camellia seeds. Thanks to that, a plenty of oil was squeezed out, more than I could have gotten by myself. Incidentally, Gantz hands have turned all wet with oil.

"....."

"Um, cheers for good work, Gantz."

"...d-damn ittttt!!"

With Camellia Oil all over him, Gantz had headed towards the store part where Taku and Kei were.

"Hey, Yun-chan. What will you do now?"

Minute had rushed me, wanting me to proceed with the next step. Beside her, Mami-san stood silently but with excitement in her eyes.

"Um, first I'm going to emulsify Camellia Oil, 【Water of Life】 and stabilizer at a 5-6-1 ratio."

This time, I dissolved the Beeswax in hot water and mixed it with Camellia Oil. After adding a small amount of 【Water of Life】 in there, I continued to mix them together until they blend. This work would be faster if I used automatic stirrer that was in my workshop, but this time I did it all manually, slowly mixing 【Water of Life】 and oil into a cream.

"Keh, it's quite hard, but by doing this we get a base cream."

Although in this state the item still didn't have any effect, the scent of Beeswax was great.

"Amazing. Can I take a little?"

"M-me too, me too."

"Go on."

When I passed fresh base cream to them, the two scooped it up with their index fingers and spread it on their arm, ascertaining how comfortable it is. I also rubbed some on the back of my hand and when I raised it to my nose, I could smell a faint, sweet honey aroma.

Although there was no change in stats, it made me feel a little happy.

"How is it? The comfort, scent and such."

"It smells a little sweet. How would you make a lip cream?"

"For that, I would add more stabilizer making it closer to a solid."

"Then, at the time how about you mix in some honey or a flower extract for the scent?"

I hurriedly wrote down Minute's advice.

Although it felt like it was to Minute's liking, but Mami-san frowned slightly in response to the sweet smell.

"Mami-san, if the scent of Beeswax is no good, how about this one?"

When I used a material in exchange and held out the purified Moss Wax, it seemed like Mami-san preferred a more refreshing scent of greenery.

"I might like this one."

"I see. So the preferences can vary depending on just a single material."

Slightly impressed, I have divided the sample base cream into small containers. Currently, preparation of a base cream was the main goal, but overall it should exert an effect by adding more material afterwards.

The small portions of base cream were for verifying the combinations with other materials.

"Still, Camellia Oil, huh. It might be good to putting it on the hair directly."

"Then why don't you try? Your hair might turn shiny."

When I muttered that half-jokingly, Minute in the edge of my field of view had made a merry smile.

"True. Let's try it on Yun-chan then. Mami, hold Yun-chan down!"

"Y-yes!"

Mami-san had clung to my waist as I was making base cream. Although it was far from being a restraint, seeing her desperation, I hesitated to resist.

"Yun-chan has long black hair, so we'll try it out a little."

"H-hey, Minute. Won't you calm down? I'm fine, really. Also, I'm a man, too."

I tried to resist with my words, but Minute approached with her hands covered thinly in Camellia Oil.

"Resign yourself!"

"Hhyah?!"

She grasped my head from behind and holding it down strongly, she rubbed oil on my hair.

"How is it! This Camellia Oil hair care!"

"Uu-faa, w-wait, this is..."

I involuntarily let out a voice, it felt good. As the oil was rubbed into my head with modest strength, it felt so comfortable I naturally relaxed my body.

Before I realized, Mami-san's restraint had disappeared and I fell down limply on the table located on the wooden deck.

"Y-you're horrible."

"U-uwoaa, I can see it glow."

"**gulp*,* this is some terrifying effect."

As the two stared, I took out a mirror to reflect my appearance in and ascertained the effect of Camellia Oil.

My long black hair had an increased lustre and was strongly reflecting light, glowing. As I slid my fingertip on it, the texture of the hair had grown smooth.

But the problem was, that because of the massage Minute gave me my face was flushed and tears appeared in the corner of my eyes.

I squat down in place in order to hide my sloppy-looking face.

"This isn't me!"

"It's amazing. Your hair is even more beautiful now."

"I don't need such praise!"

I sat down and retracted my neck like a turtle, waiting for myself to settle down. Meanwhile, Minute and Mami-san had covered each

other's hair with remaining Camellia Oil and their merry voices reached me.

Minute's wavy blonde hair had turned smooth and Mami-san's smooth hair under the hat had become too smooth, making the hairband slip off and fall down.

"You should enjoy yourself more, Yun-chan. Hey, won't you make a lip balm next?"

"I would like a hand cream with refreshing scent."

"What, aren't you having fun."

"Taku, you're here! Stop those two..."

It seemed like Taku, who escaped from the task of squeezing out oil from the camellia seeds, has come back. I turned around in order to ask Taku for help with dealing with the two girls acting enthusiastic about cosmetics and tried to make me a guinea pig, but when I saw him I fell silent.

"Hm? What is it, Yun? Falling silent like that."

"Ww-w-what's with that sparkle!"

Is there anything strange? Taku puzzled himself as he stroked his neck, but his hair looked much better and was sparkling as compared to a while ago. Somehow, he looked cooler now.

Something happened in this short while.

"Oh, Gantz had touched all over my head while his hands were sticky with oil."

It was a real pain. While Taku said that, beside him there was Gantz, who had Camellia Oil all over his face and whose skin was all shiny, but he still had a smug expression on his face. There was no change in particular in Kei's appearance, but, the moving parts of the armours are smoother with oil put on them, he muttered.

"Uwoah, Taku-san looks even more refreshing."

"Hoee, so it has an effect on men too."

Since I had a female character, the Camellia Oil had emphasized on its femininity upon use, but it had a different effect on Taku, even though we are both men in *real*, I thought and tears appeared in my eyes.

"Shut up! Stupid Taku! Don't show yourself in front of me for a while!"

"What happened, Yun."

"Hmph!"

I vented out my anger. But she's being shy, she's embarrassed, Minute and Mami-san had decided. That's definitely not it.

Meanwhile, with a smile on his face Gantz had made a pissed off expression and, are you showing off, you damn riajuu?! And delivered a body blow to Taku from the side.

I somehow managed to drive Taku away and I crouched behind the counter, holding my legs.

"Why only Taku gets to look more manly. When my hair turns glossy I only become more feminine. Even though I'm a man in *real*."

sniff, I sat down for a while waiting for my energy to return.

Hating myself for driving Taku away mid-way as I vented my anger, it didn't seem like I can face him for a while.

"...Taku's a dumbass."

A quiet mutter had spilled from under the counter.

Chapter 4 - The Highlands Area and the Great Rampage

A sound of hard metal being struck had spread inside the workshop, sparks scattered at the same time as the hammer was swung down.

I poured the metal that melted in the furnace into the mould, then adjusted the metal in the mould by hitting it with a hammer as it cooled down.

I made ordinary Iron Ingots, Fine Iron Ingots and up to Silver Ingots.

"Phew... I thought it would go easy once I set up a Magical Furnace, but my level was lower than I had imagined."

Possessed SP25

【Bow Lv44】【Longbow Lv18】【Sky Eyes Lv11】【Swiftness Lv5】【See-Through Lv19】【Sorcery Lv4】【Enchant Arts Lv33】【Earth Element Talent Lv24】【Dosing Lv35】【Cook Lv6】

Unequipped:

【Alchemy Lv37】【Synthesis Lv38】【Crafting Knowledge Lv39】【Taming Lv12】【Engraving Lv12】【Swimming Lv13】【Linguistics Lv23】【Climbing Lv11】

Even 【Craftsmanship】's higher Sense, 【Engraving】 was raised higher all at once when I did a large amount of work changing ore into ingots.

At first, I tried changing Black Iron Ore into ingots, but because of my low level and insufficient DEX which was related to crafting it had failed continuously. Therefore, I slowly accumulated experience by working steadily.

"I've got 12 of ordinary iron, 10 of fine iron, 18 of silver. Well, I guess it's enough. Still, it's hot."

Saying so, I put away the ore into item box for materials and moved away from the newly-installed magical furnace.

Although there was a magic barrier, there was hot air hanging over the surroundings of the furnace. I took one step away from the barrier and entering the cold part of the workshop I exhaled.

"Ahh, so cool. I got tired because it's so hot in front of the furnace."

I wiped off the sweat and put the cup with cold tea I had prepared beforehand to my forehead and neck before gulping the tea down all at once.

Phew, once I have calmed down I stared at the mountains of ore illuminated in the light coming from the Magical Furnace that still was blazing with powerful flames nourished with MP.

Most of the remaining ore was Black Iron Ore and Blurite Ore I couldn't process.

"These are really stubborn."

Earlier, I said something horrible to Taku and then started to swing the hammer to forget self-loathing, but before I realized I forgot about Taku and have absorbed myself in work to change the ingots.

"Black Iron Ore is too hard and I winded up purchasing new hammers again and again. And Blurite Ore failed either because of my level being too low, stats being too low or the lack of firepower."

I tried making it with the hammer sold by NPC, but Black Iron Ore had exhausted the hammer's durability because of its incredible hardness. Blurite Ore didn't melt sufficiently despite the fact I poured MP into the furnace to the limit.

"I could use items for increasing the temperature in the furnace, but first I need to change this fragile Iron Hammer to another one."

Although I did think of several points to work on, currently the person I could ask for it, Magi-san, should be concentrating on making Blurite Ore into ingots.

"Geez, Magi-san really is dependable."

I heaved a sigh as the Blurite Ore had tinged with blue when I changed the angle I looked at it.

Since I was unable to turn it into an ingot at the moment, it was useless to me.

"Let's pass the remaining Blurite Ore to Magi-san later."

After muttering quietly I looked at the watch in the menu.

It was nearly two o'clock in the afternoon, I don't want to go, I said and heaved a sigh.

"What kind of face should I make when we search just the two of us."

Thinking of it now, it wasn't something to get that angry about. Still, it was a fact that being shown off the difference in our manliness had worsened my mood.

"Haa, why did I get so angry."

Feeling that to be a puny reason, I felt like the regret and self-loathing had become a weight on my back.

"It can't be helped. Let's go!"

Slapped my own cheeks with both hands and using the mini-portal set up in the workshop I started the transition to the registered portal at the highlands area.

The destination I transferred to was the portal ahead of the cliff in the north we have climbed earlier.

This time, I was scheduled to meet up with Taku in there, but there was also another person waiting aside from Taku.

"Take care of me today, Yun-kun."

"E-Emily-san?! Why are you here?! Rather, how did you make it this far?!"

This was the portal on top of the cliff. Since we have steadily acquired and learned the 【Climbing】 Sense, I was surprised that Emily-san had climbed up the cliff and arrived in here.

"Yun, you've come."

"Why is Emily-san here?"

"Is there a problem if she's here?"

"No... there's none but, you could have said a word that you're coming."

"No, I'm not sure what was it about, but it seemed like I've made you angry, Yun. Whenever I tried to speak with you, I was avoided so there was no opportunity to talk about it."

Sorry about that, he said, but I was completely at fault here.

Haa～, I heaved a long sigh. Just how rude was I to Taku, once again I felt that I caused him trouble.

"It was my bad. I was frustrated and ended up venting my anger on you. Sorry."

"Naw, I don't really mind. Anyway, let's go!"

Taku made a refreshing smile to me, who has endlessly distressed myself with self-loathing and started walking towards the highland.

Although I reconciled with Taku using the momentum, I didn't forget Emily-san's existence.

"I get it that there was no opportunity to talk, but how did you come up here, Emily-san? Did you simply pick up 【Climbing】 Sense and climb?"

"Wrong. I rode a flying synthetic mob to raise up here."

"Uuuh, sounds unfair."

"Certainly it's easy to climb this way, but they're disposable. Also, it's not like I get a permanent Sense either."

"It might be so, but..."

"And... I wanted to see how you two are doing, so I forced myself in."

Although she didn't want to get involved too much in game with people whom she knows in real, but she realized we are acting strange and had forcibly joined our adventure today.

"Well, my worries were unfounded though."

"Thank you, Emily-san. For worrying about us, that is."

"Looks like your usual expression is back, Yun-kun."

Emily-san had smiled with relief, but since I couldn't tell what kind of expression I had, I groped my face all over to check.

"Yun, Emily, what are you two talking about?"

"About how it's unfair that I climbed up here from below using a flying synthetic mob."

"Ohh, that."

Taku made a knowing expression and entered the conversation.

"You should charge the players who want to get here as fast as possible 100kG each and earn money that way."

"Carrying those fifty players gathered under the cliff is a pain so I'll pass."

"But, at some point there will be someone who'll start bussiness by transporting players up here. This is probably the only time you can earn anything, Emily."

"I'm not doing it. My main is being 【Material Merchant】. If I can't profit with that, what I'm going to do is to find a way by raising my 【Synthesis】 and 【Alchemy】 Senses' levels."

Taku's and Emily-san's dialogue was quite interesting and a smile spilled on my face.

"I thought you two don't get along that well, but it doesn't seem like it was true."

"It's not like I dislike Emily, it's just that we rarely get in contact."

"I don't try actively to get involved either. I mean, it's a hassle to do that with someone you know in *real*."

In the meantime, we have arrived in the highlands area.

The scenery was unlike during the dawn's morning mist and it was now possible to overlook the highlands.

There was a small hill ahead on the highlands and in the deepest part on top of the hill, lying down, there were horses several times Ryui's size.

Other than that, there were cattle-type mobs scattered, as well as a herd of goat-type mobs with atrociously twisted horns. Near the rocky

mountain that was in the middle of the plain, there were plump and fat chicken-type mobs flying in the sky.

Seeing the clearly toy-like chicken figures fly in the sky while ignoring the laws oh physics, I burst out into quiet laughter.

"Fantasy, isn't it. This scene that is."

"You're right. Well then, let's defeat some mobs to check their strength and drop items."

With Taku in the front, we approached enemy that caught our attention and started combat.

The cattle mob, Steel Cow who instead of underdeveloped horns had its head covered in plate armour which had extended to to the back, charged at us alone.

Although the cow's attack was similar to that of a Big Boar, the part where she was capable of changing direction as she ran was different. Therefore, it was necessary for someone to attract her attention in order to fight back.

The cow rushing at Taku and Emily-san who were the vanguard, seeing them split up in different directions, had aimed for Taku without any hesitation.

Although she ran straight at Taku, he was better at predicting the opponent's course.

"《Enchant》 —— Speed!"

When I used an enchant from the rearguard raising Taku's speed he shook off the cow's pursuit and suddenly struck back on her flank with an Art.

"Take this! ——《Power Buster》!"

The strongly swung two swords cut the cow's side, dealing large amount of damage. After receiving damage she had tried to charge at Taku again, but something had entangled around her hind legs and she fell forward.

"——《Whip Bite》!"

"——《Mud Pool》!"

Emily-san's connecting sword had restrained the cow's hind legs and I, using my earth magic and cow's weight, had her rooted in the mud.

"One more time! ——《Power Buster》!"

The Art Taku used again had settled on the cow's flank, making her let out a loud cry and fall on the side.

After confirming the cow had turned into particles of light and disappeared, everyone lowered their weapons.

"Well, I guess it's possible to take them down with brute force approach."

"No, that would be only you, Taku. I think mine and Emily-san's attacks are short on power for that."

When I spoke, Emily-san had nodded in agreement.

Steel Cows who had high strength and endurance would be difficult to fight against while solo at the moment.

The goat mobs we fought against next, Mage Goats, were groups of goats who used magic.

Their magic was limited to fire elemental magic, but they mainly used magic which caused sleep and stun bad statuses. The entire herd showered us with barrage of magic, but they were vulnerable against physical attacks so Taku and Emily-san had entered between them and took them down one after another.

For the last, the roundish bird mob, Cockatrice——

"This one seems more compatible with Yun."

"You're right. Yun-kun is the only one who can attack from a distance, after all."

The attack method of Cockatrices was surprise attack from the sky in a group.

And, their normal attacks had a low probability of causing a paralysis bad status, also, although weak, they were capable of using restraining magic of the wind.

However, I kept shooting them down one Cockatrice after after another from an overwhelming range using my long bow.

"Yup. Looks like we took down most of the enemies in this area. What's left, is the horse-type mob on top of that hill."

After confirming that there's no Cockatrices in the surroundings with my 【Sky Eyes】, I directed my gaze towards the top of the hill.

"The boss' name is Lightning Horse, huh. I wonder if we can beat him."

"Enemies in this area are quite tough, so the boss will be correspondingly strong, right."

"True. Let's give up on fighting him without a plan."

Responding to my mutter, it seemed like Taku and Emily-san were being careful about fighting him.

Since it was a boss no one has fought against before, his strength was an unknown.

"Well, there's no use thinking about it. Let's go around and get some drops and collect some items."

Emily-san and I agreed with Taku, we went around the highlands defeating mobs that caught our attention and getting some drop items.

Steel Cows dropped Steel Cow's Hard Leather and Beef Tenderloin.

Mage Goats dropped Mage Goat's Horn and Milk.

Cockatrices dropped Cockatrice Feathers and Blood.

From among these, Steel Cow's Hard Leather could be used to make a leather armour, Beef Tenderloin and Mage Goat's Milk could be used in cooking. Also, Mage Goat's horn was hard enough so that it could be used for a spear's tip once processed.

And, the usage method of Cockatrice Feathers was——

"Feathers can be used for making arrows using Synthesis, and I guess blood can be used for making potions?"

"As for me, I can use blood as a source of information for making a synthetic mob. Also, I wonder if it could be remade into another material using Alchemy."

After taking out the materials we acquired, Emily-san and I considered the material's methods of usage.

"You two, we're in the middle of the field so leave thinking for later."

"Sorry. We were just curious."

I tried to cover it up with a smile, but Taku had heaved a sigh.

"Well, since you'll only continue to miss if you fight in that state, let's take a break."

"Is that fine? We still haven't examined that rocky mountain."

"Right now that would be dangerous, considering you're distracted. Once break's over we'll go to that mountain and I'll have you do some mining."

"Leave it to me. I need ore myself, too."

Emily-san answered him proudly. For the time being, we decided to return to the nearby safety area.

Still, I wondered if it was my imagination that the highlands were too wide an area for so few enemy mobs. Maybe their number was small

to make it appropriate for the small number of players who arrived in here in the first place.

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Once I returned to to the safety area, I took out a mixing kit for using Mixing in the field, then crushed Mage Goat's Horn to make it easy for making a potion with it.

On the other hand, Emily-san had used 【Alchemy】's Higher Conversion on the select materials or used 【Synthesis】 using various material combinations, but I was the first one to get any results.

"Emily-san, how are results on your side?"

"Let's see. Using 【Alchemy】 on Steel Cow's Hard Leather makes it a Large Hard Leather. As for others, well, both Synthesis and Alchemy are all misses. Other than the leather, I guess there's no choice but to use them for synthetic mob nuclei. And what are you doing, Yun-kun?"

"I crushed Mage Goat's Horn so that it dissolved in base cream easily."

Just when I managed to grind down the horn, I put the powder in the water where it melted, colouring water red.

And for the remaining powder, I took out the container with small portion of base cream I made the other day and put mixed the powder

in it. I added it gradually and it firmly dissolved as I continued to mix it in with a whisk.

"Yun. Is that the one you made the other day?"

"Yeah. I mixed the base cream I made from 【Double Camellia】's oil, 【Water of Life】 and Beeswax with material dropped from mob, and the result is a cream that gives elemental resistance——【Element Cream】.

"So it wasn't just a cosmetic item."

Lightly ignoring Taku's mutter. If I mixed powder in all at once, the emulsified and stable cream would have returned into a liquid state so I mixed it carefully by adding powder little by little.

After a while, when the milky white base cream had changed into pale red I stopped mixing and returned it back to its original container.

"All right, its complete."

I looked at the created item's stats and confirmed completion for the time being.

Resistance Cream 【Consumable】

【Fire Element Resistance (small)】

"Hmm. As expected, the effect is low because I didn't use the equipment in my workshop to make it."

"Yun-kun, what kind of item is this?"

Emily-san spoke to me while I was lost in thoughts. Speaking of which, I haven't explained the effect of this item yet.

"This is a cream that grants resistance to elemental damage. I guess Mage Goat's Horn grants resistance to fire element."

After saying so, I lined up the container with completed creams. There was light blue, brown, pale green, milky white and grey-brown creams one next to another.

"I mixed water element's 【Blue Gelatin】 in this one, the brown one is earth element made with 【Goblin's Horn】, the green one is wind element made with 【Aero Snake's Scales】, milky white one corresponds to light element and was made with powder made out of 【Phosphorous Soul Crystal】, the grey-brown one is for darkness element and was made with 【Magical Organism's Catalyst Metal】 which drops from Darkman."

And the one I just made using powder from Mage Goat's Horn, was pale red cream which corresponded to fire element.

With this, it's all six types, I said and displayed them, which resulted in an impressed response.

"Hee, an item increasing defence against elements. But, these materials are all quite rare, so it's not all that sweet."

Certainly, although 【Blue Gelatin】 and 【Goblin's Horn】 drop from slime and goblin enemies, so getting them is easy enough.

And, the 【Phosphorous Soul Crystal】 Wisps dropped was also relatively easy to obtain using a slightly special method. Then there was the boss mob Darkman.

"Can't you make it with cheaper materials?"

Taku did have a point. But, there was a reason for this.

"In fact, I tried using Mold Slime's Strongly Acidic Jelly, powdered dried stomach of a Moor Frog, Bat's Poison Blood, Acid Dozer's Acid Fluids and such, but the result was——"

"Result was?"

"——There were ones that had bad status effects and things that deliver continuous damage to the user, so they can't be used."

When I answered so, I see, Taku and Emily-san said and made complex expressions.

"Also, the resistance effect is correspondingly higher the rarer the material. Although, Aero Snake's Scales seem to be on the same rank as Cockatrice's Blood."

I mixed in Cockatrice's Blood into Beeswax base cream, completing a green cream this way. For red blood to change into green wind element, this sure is fantasy.

Taku stared at the 【Element Cream】 as if he tried to judge the value of it and Emily-san squirmed with curiosity as a player who loves verifying things.

"Then, Yun-kun. Can duplicate of this effect be used? What would happen if your 《Element Enchant》 was used or the armour itself had resistance to an element?"

"In that case, it's whether resistance against a single element can be strengthened and whether a resistance to another element can be put on."

Taku joined the conversation and the field had changed into where we verified 【Element Cream】's effect.

"First, let's check if the same element's effects will overlap. I'll use the cream, and then Yun will use 《Element Enchant》, is that all right?"

After saying so, Taku lightly coated his arm with water resistance cream.

"Oh, the effect properly appeared in the status. Yun, I'm ready."

"Got it. Well then, I'm starting. 《Element Enchant》——Armour."

I took out Grade 4 Water Element Stone and using it, I applied water element enchant on Taku's armour.

Currently, Taku had water resistance cream's 【Water Resistance (minimal)】 on him, but how would 【Water Resistance (small)】 affect him, I wondered. And the result was——

"It changed now. The effect was overwritten and turned to 【Water Resistance (small)】."

"In other words, Yun-kun's 《Element Enchant》 and 【Element Cream】 have the same effect. That's why the effect was overwritten."

Continuing, when we tried a different element's cream, the result was that the temporary element resistance was overwritten.

"Now, what's left is to see whether it can overlap with equipment that has permanent resistance effect."

Saying so, Taku took out equipment and accessories which had resistance effect and checked his status.

"Oh, it worked."

"Your 'it worked' sounds really light."

"Isn't it great that the effects overlap?"

When Taku had lightly announced the result, I unconsciously retorted to him and Emily-san followed up with a wry smile.

"Well then, the conclusion is that if you use a temporary effect that's duplicate of a permanent one, you receive a decent amount of elemental resistance."

"My normal enchant and resistance cream don't overlap. So, I guess I'll sell cream as a set with Enchant Stones."

Although we have summarized the results of 【Element Cream】's verification, there was still some dissatisfaction within me.

"Somehow, I feel that I won't really be using 【Element Cream】 since my 《Element Enchant》 overlaps with it."

"But that can't be helped, right? Although I can't affirm it yet, but there might be difference in the duration of the effect and such."

"I guess. Also, there's the issue of whether I'll be able to craft cream of all elements in a stable manner."

While in the 【Atelier】 I had easily usable items provided at low cost, I did sell highly-effective items, so having a variation in item performance made me feel bad.

"I wonder if I can get some items that provide stable amount of resistance."

"...hey, Yun-kun. If 《Element Enchant》 and 【Element Cream】 have the same strenghtening effect, won't Element Stones work? They're graded from Grade 5 so it's easy to divide it accordingly to effectiveness."

"...I see. I didn't think of that."

I immediately tried what Emily-san had pointed out.

After crushing an earth element's Grade 4 Element Stone, I mixed it in the base cream, crafting 【Element Cream】.

Resistance Cream 【Consumable】

【Earth Element Resistance (small)】

"Thank you, Emily-san. It succeeded."

"You're welcome. With this, the demand for Element Stones will further increase."

As she smiled merrily, she sure has commerce in her blood, I thought with a bitter smile.

"Well then, now that you two's anxiety has cleared up, should we continue our search and verification?"

For the search, Taku meant confirming what items can be mined from the huge rocky mountain in this highlands area. And by verification, he meant confirming the differences between 《Element Enchant》 and 【Element Cream】.

Doing both at once had its advantages.

"Taku will use fire resistance cream. On Emily-san, I will put down a fire element resistance enchant."

"Understood."

"Let's start. 《Element Enchant》——Armour."

I passed the cream I made from Mage Goat's Horn to Taku and used Grade 4 Element Stone to put fire element resistance enchant on Emily-san.

Both had the same 【Fire Element Resistance (small)】 effect, but for how long would it last, I wonder.

"All right! Let's resume the search! We'll head for that rocky mountain."

Taku started walking ahead, aiming for the mountain.

We approached it while passing by the enemies we encountered on the way. Since in the middle of it we found a colony of herbs, our progression had slowed down a little.

Although I couldn't tell its exact size from a distance, as we approached the mountain, on top of it I saw what looked like a Cockatrice nest from which chubby chicken took off occasionally.

"Chickens, cattle and goats make the atmosphere pastoral."

"Since all enemies we met are active upon encounter, we enter combat every time and don't get time to rest, making it quite hard."

Emily-san and I felt disappointed by that part as we aimed for the mountain.

And, Taku had noticed abnormality in the rocky mountain early.

"Yun, Emily. Something's strange. Raise your weapons."

"Eeh? Taku?"

"There's no time. Hurry!"

"Hurry you say, kyahh?!"

While we stood confused, the abnormality Taku felt had manifested in form of shaking. Although Emily-san and I had trouble standing,

Taku alone pulled out his two long swords and looked up at the huge, rocky mountain.

"——The mountain is moving!"

Looking from the side, it seemed like Taku's face convulsed and the mountain ahead of his sight has began to vibrate.

When it did, limbs with short and thick claws have appeared at the bottom of the mountain, as well as a short, hard tail and a turtle head with a pointed chin.

Surprised by the fact the rocky mountain was a mob, I looked upwards.

It was big enough to overshadow the large bosses we have defeated previously, such as th Great Eater of Mythical Beasts, Garm Phantom and Cannibal Plant.

Truly, an existence akin to a mountain.

"Superdreadnought-class land tortoise mob——Grand Rock, huh."

I heard Taku's mutter and the next moment, Grand Rock roared.

『"VVUUOOOOOOOOO——"』

As the air trembled, I held down my ears to bear the roar and at the same time, the surrounding mobs have started an uproar.

All the mobs in the highlands have received 【Anger】 bad status.

"This is bad. Let's escape for now!"

"Taku! Escape, but where?!"

"Doesn't matter, run! At this rate we'll be surrounded and crushed!"

Mobs I have seen have started rampaging around the highland indiscriminately, leaving themselves to 【Anger】.

Also, Steel Cows who previously walked around alone started running in a herd. Mage Goat herds further increased in numbers.

Cattle, goat and chicken mobs started to appear on the highlands, coming from the distant forest and mobs have started to gradually grow denser in the broad highland area.

"Certainly, this looks bad. Taku-kun, any idea where to run?"

"We can only either run outside of the area or get so close to Grand Rock that the mobs won't approach us!"

The place we were in was nearly halfway between the area's exit and the Grand Rock. We didn't have time to think whether we go back and move on forward.

"Look, a herd of cows is coming our way!"

The cows have charged straight at us. In front, there was one with a remarkable physique and body of deep red colour, but it wasn't the time to be bothered about that.

Together with Taku and Emily-san, we somehow avoided that group and started running outside of the area.

Compared to the direction Grand Rock was in, the cattle herds moved in straight lines, but they were like a tsunami, be engulfed once and there's no saving you.

"If you're avoiding them, move to the side! Absolutely don't escape in the same direction they're running to!"

"I know! This time they're coming from the left!"

As I dodged the incoming attack from the herd of cows, the moment I used 【Sky Eyes】 to avoid, I looked at the red cow mob once again.

It was a completely different mob from Steel Cows and I confirmed it was a boss mob called Iron Cow.

I checked the surroundings as I ran and in the distance, I saw a Mage Goat with large and round horns and a Cockatrice on top of the Grand Rock who was ten times larger than a normal one.

"What the hell's going on!"

"Yun! More cows are coming!"

"——?!!"

As I ran looking at the surroundings while spitting curses, before I realized distance opened between me and the other two. Although I jumped to the opposite side of where a herd of cows had emerged and was able to avoid being engulfed, I was separated from Taku and Emily-san.

"Taku! Emily-san!"

"Yun, escape for now! Climb on the Grand Rock!"

"Taku-kun, a herd of Mage Goats! Yun-kun, if you're safe afterwards, let's meet up in front of the portal later!"

The moment Emily-san spoke a warning, a huge wall of flames appeared between me and them.

I couldn't remain in one place in the middle of the mobs' onslaught forever.

I started running towards the Grand Rock who was in the opposite direction of where Taku and Emily-san was aiming to reach, beyond that wall of flames.

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——Climb on the Grand Rock.

I believed Taku's words and ran towards the gigantic land tortoise.

However, as if to prevent me from doing so, enemy attacked from the distance, both from the sky and the ground.

"Tch, 《Enchant》——Speed!"

Increasing my speed with an enchant, I confirmed the barrage of magic released at me by Mage Goats from a distance.

I continued to avoid in the time extended by 【Sky Eyes】, but receiving an attack from a wind sickle released by Cockatrice behind me, I was blown forward by the impact. Right after that, I saw Mage Goat's fire magic appear where I was a moment earlier.

"Oww, that was close. Couldn't really avoid that one."

As I ran at constant speed, Steel Cows whose movements have turned monotonous in state of Anger have charged in my direction.

"Mobs of this level predict movements before attacking, don't they."

In that case, I thought, and intentionally slowed down slightly.

And continuing to avoid monotonously, I narrowed down enemy's predictions, making enemy concentrate their attacks on one point.

"...keep the pace, then accelerate at once!"

As if chanting, I maintained seventy percent of my maximum speed and observed the enemy movements with 【Sky Eyes】.

When enemy entered a motion for attacking, in conjunction with the experienced time extension of 【Sky Eyes】 I entered my top speed and moved through when the enemy was unguarded.

Once I slipped through Mage Goats' attacks, next I found a herd of Steel Cows.

Steel Cows rushed at me with even more ferocity than normally. I didn't have the confidence to shake them off as they came at me with considerable speed and if I'm stranded in place, Cockatrices and Mage Goats I left behind would catch up.

"If you add the mobs behind into this, I don't think I'll be able to escape."

Even now, the amount of enemies I could take on was the limit for me alone. Of course, assuming survival as a goal rather than defeating them.

It was clear that if I avoid the Steel Cow's charge poorly, I'll be stifled immediately.

"And so, running away is winning!"

Steel Cows have come from the right side as if to block my path. Unless I slip by, I won't reach Grand Rock. I had to break through no matter what.

Since I was regulating my pace, I recovered my speed and swallowed a speed-increasing Boost Tablet, held Magic Gems in both hands and started running at maximum speed.

I ran through before a herd of Steel Cows could block my way, but since I couldn't make it in time I decided to jump forward at full speed.

"——《Clay Shield》!"

I created an earthen wall beneath myself and using it for footing, I jumped high into the air.

The herd of Steel Cows rushed beneath me, Cockatrices and Mage Goats after me from behind.

Since the distance I flew wasn't enough, I was about to fall into the herd of cows, but holding Magic Gems in my both hands I spoke the keyword.

"——【Bomb】!"

Receiving the blast of the Magic Gem's explosion behind me, I accelerated in mid-air.

Reproducing the big jump I did once before, I increased the flight distance.

"And, I was able to land safely."

Although I lost my balance and had to support myself with a hand, I somehow managed to keep running.

I took a glance behind and saw the group of Steel Cows who were unable to change direction block the Mage Goats chasing after me.

Looking into the air with the 【Sky Eyes】, I saw a flock of Cockatrices had gathered and was trying to attack again.

"Blow away! ——《Zone Bomb》!"

The magic whose range was expanded with the 【Sky Eyes】 had blown away Cockatrices flying in a formation.

Because of the dense formation they were flying in, they received accumulated chain damage from each magic activated, thanks to which I was able to eliminate anything that could prevent me from climbing Grand Rock.

"All right, succeeded! All that's left is running to where Grand Rock is."

Just a little more and I'd reach the giant tortoise. And that's when mobs who were sporadically attacking me started to withdraw one after another.

"...monsters are backing down?"

While the enemy didn't approach anywhere near the Grand Rock, the huge tortoise dragged a loud sound and sand cloud behind it.

Since I was scared of being crushed by either its legs or tail were I to approach poorly, I took some distance from Grand Rock and observed it first.

At this point, only Cockatrices remained above me, but they weren't interested in me in the least and only returned to their nest on top of the Grand Rock.

Just, I felt like I saw a conspicuously large individual among Cockatrices above, but it had quickly hid behind the cliff.

"Ten times larger than a normal Cockatrice? I saw it earlier from a distance, but it doesn't seem like I was mistaken."

I looked up again, but I couldn't see it no longer. Also, I had to decide on what's in front of me before concerning myself with that.

"What should I do? Should I continue running like this until this is over?"

That's troublesome in itself, I thought and when I raised my head to look up so high my neck started to hurt and saw narrow, spiralling mountain roads on the entire rocky mountain that was Grand Rock's back.

The footing was a little unstable, but it was a safe area.

I resolved myself and jumped on the Grand Rock.

Although it seemed like I would fall as I jumped after running in parallel to it, I somehow managed to cling to Grand Rock and riding on it was surprisingly not so bad.

"Its unexpectedly steady."

I grasped the nearby rock and as not to be shaken off by the vibrations caused by Grand Rock's movements, I slowly climbed up the mountain.

For the time being I equipped 【Climbing】 Sense and safety equipment, driving a wedge into the rocky mountain I proceeded slowly.

When I climbed about ten percent of the mountain's height, a narrow mountain road has spread which had enough space for a party of six to rest.

"I can be at ease if its this wide. Doesn't seem like I'll fall too easily. Still, I wonder what's happening, really."

I pat the rocky surface nearby and looked up to the top of the mountain.

Viewed from afar it looked like a mountain, but it was in fact a superdreadnought-class mob and the mobs on the field started to rampage in conjunction with its movements.

"Good grief, I'd like some info beforehand."

I heaved a sigh while riding on the Grand Rock, but after speaking, another thought appeared in my mind.

Those who are called frontier players or raiders enter new areas without any information, just like this. Thus, it's normal that there's no information about it. It just means its our turn this time.

"Still, how long is this rampage going to continue?"

I overlooked the surroundings with my 【Sky Eyes'】 far-sightedness, but the rampage of the mobs in the highlands showed no signs of subsiding.

Currently, the mobs in the highlands area were rampaging after receiving 【Anger】 bad status.

It was a bad status which decreased the defensive statistics which were DEF and MIND, instead increasing the ATK and INT as well as causing a frenzied mental state.

And there was no signs of the mobs recovering over time.

"Well, no use thinking about it. Let's search this area for a while."

Although we were supposed to examine it together with Taku and Emily-san, I'll do what I can by myself.

"Now, I wonder what I'll get."

I returned the kitchen knife into the sheath at the belt for climbing equipment and took out a pickaxe for mining.

And I started to move on the Grand Rock on what was akin to a rocky mountain road by grasping rocks on its back.

Since there was no mobs attacking me and there was only occasional shaking, I took breaks in moderation as I examined the surroundings of the open space.

Taking a brief look, I found several spiral routes for climbing the Grand Rock and on both the surface and the break spaces away from the road there were some mining points.

"If I climb too high, I'll have trouble returning and I'm scared of getting close to the Cockatrice nest. Let's gather some samples nearby."

I returned to the wide break space and stood in front of a mining point.

There was footing which made mining relatively easy and space to swing a larger pickaxe.

"Okay, let's go. ——?!!"

Although I swung down the pickaxe at the mining point like usual, it had bounced away.

"Damn hard, my hand's gone numb."

Since my hands were trembling all numb, I let go of the pickaxe for a moment and waved them.

And this time carefully as not to break the pickaxe, I swung it strongly to dig up ore.

I acquired fifteen pieces of ore in a very inefficient manner before the pickaxe broke.

"Woah, the Iron Pickaxe broke... and it was the best one sold by NPC, too."

After that, I used up the small pickaxes treated as farm tools and acquired a total of twenty-seven pieces of ore.

In the meantime, the intervals between each vibration of the Grand Rock had gradually increased and the rampage of mobs beneath has slowly subsided.

Mobs who have newly appeared in the highlands area have returned to the woods outside and above me, a white mass of Cockatrices had returned to the nest they had near the summit of the Grand Rock.

That's when a friend call from Taku had come.

『"Yun, you safe?"』

"Yeah, I somehow managed to reach Grand Rock. What about you two?"

『"We managed to safely exit the highlands area. Mobs rampage has subsided so you should come back too, Yun."』

"Got it. I'll return right away."

I descended down Grand Rock's back whose movements have stopped and headed to the portal near the highlands area's entrance.

In there, Taku and Emily-san had waited for me, I increased my pace to ascertain the two are all right.

"It's great that you are okay, you two."

"Sure, I'm all right."

"Rather, what are you saying after enjoying yourself."

Taku had greeted me with a smile, but Emily-san had stared at him intently in response to that. It seemed like something happened while I wasn't with them.

"What happened?"

"While I was running away, Yun-kun's fire 《Element Enchant》's duration had expired, but since Taku-kun's Resistance Cream's duration lasted longer he fought mobs on the highland area's peripheries, decreasing their number."

"Because I had fire element resistance I could beat a herd of Mage Goats with ease! I also took down a boss mob, getting both strengthening material and drops!"

"What boss mob! Heck, ain't that dangerous!"

Although he said so proudly, I was appalled at him taking such risk while mobs were rampaging dangerously with 【Anger】 bad status.

"Speaking of boss mobs, there was a cow that had a different name. If I'm not wrong, it was Iron Cow."

"That's right. It might be that the boss mobs appear for a limited amount of time unlike the normal ones. Iron Cow is the boss of the Steel Cow mobs. Warlock Goat is the boss of the Mage Goat mobs. I didn't confirm whether a boss mob of Cockatrices exists, but there should be one."

"If there is a Cockatrice boss mob, it's over there I guess."

Ahead of my line of sight was the Cockatrice nest on top of the unmoving Grand Rock's mountainback. When I approached the Grand Rock, I felt like I've seen a shadow of a large Cockatrice, maybe it wasn't just my imagination.

"So, Yun, did you find something on the mountain?"

"I didn't even climb halfway to the hill, but I found a mountain road and mining points on it. While I did get some ore I don't know, the mining point was so hard my pickaxe broke."

When I said so and showed them a pickaxe with a broken tip, Taku and Emily-san had opened their eyes wide with surprise.

"I guess a normal pickaxe is no longer enough. I'll have to consult with Magi-san on the topic."

"If you're going to 【Open Sesame】 then I'll go with you. I want to know what's the ore you've got. What about youm, Emily?"

"I'll pass. Today made me want a synthetic mob with better flight capacity so I want to research synthesis a little more. If I have a flight capability to get on that mountain, it'll be easier for me to mine ore, you see. Fortunately, I got quite the amount of Cockatrice Feathers and blood."

Emily-san responded happily. They probably met quite a few mobs on their way back.

"It's decided then. Let's take a break and go to the 【Open Sesame】 in the evening."

"I guess. I'll go back to the 【Atelier】 for now."

After saying so we parted with Emily-san, together with Taku returned to the 【Atelier】 and logged out for a break before meeting up in the evening.

Chapter 5 - Damascus and the 【Element Cream】

Evening. I met up with Taku and after contacting Magi-san beforehand we visited 【Open Sesame】. We spoke with the Clerk NPC and had him call Magi-san who had been working in the workshop in the back.

"Hey, Yun-kun and Taku-kun, it's unusual for you two to visit together. Did you come to have pair-rings made?"

"Certainly, it's unusual, but I don't want any kind of pairing with Taku."

I denied it flatly and briefly explained what I have come for.

"One of the reasons of coming this time, is to check on the Blurite Ore's research and to replenish the samples."

"Thank you, Yun-kun! With the ones I got I was able to grasp the method, but I wasn't able to make too many ingots yet."

"Then, I'll pass you some new ore."

I deposited the newly acquired Blurite Ore with Magi-san.

"Yup. I'll be able to make Yun-kun's weapon with these."

"Good for you. Looks like you'll get a new weapon."

Taku had happily hit my back, but, most likely there won't be much opportunities to use it, I ended up thinking.

And, I spoke of another issue I have come with.

"Another reason, is that I want you to take a look at something."

Saying so, I took out the unknown items I acquired from the hard mining point on the back of Grand Rock and the broken pickaxe.

"I acquired these items today at a certain mining point——【Layered Coal】 and 【Fragment of Land Emperor Turtle's Shell】. And, I broke my pickaxe on the same mining point."

What I placed on the table were 13 pieces of 【Layered Coal】 and 2 【Fragments of Land Emperor Turtle's Shell】. Since the remaining ore I mined was known, I didn't take them out.

Taking the items in her hands, Magi-san broke into a joyful expression and heaved a sigh.

"Yun-kun, why do you always bring items I really want at with such good timing, I wonder. You're troubling Onee-san here."

"Is what Yun brought in that good a material?"

Taku asked in my stead, in response to which Magi-san thought for a moment before answering.

"It's more like an intermediate material. A material that can be mined in many of high level zones. If you use Iron Ore and 【Layered Coal】 for refining, you can make Wootz Steel. It's a material that provides high durability, ATK and DEF, and is easy to handle."

"I heard of weapons made with Wootz Steel. If I'm not wrong, they're exhibited on 【Crafting Guild】's auction. I saw someone bid on it."

"Indeed. Just as you say, Taku-kun, it was exhibited only once in the past. Its distinguishing feature was that it had an unique pattern on the surface. Well, it was me who made it though."

"As I thought, Magi-san was the one who made it."

"Just once I made a weapon from Wootz Steel after many attempts, but it was my disgrace as it was too ordinary. I was forced by Cloude to sell it on auction since there wasn't enough goods that stand out, you see."

By the end, Magi-san's voice was tinged with resentment.

Considering the flow of their conversation Magi-san was probably involved with it, I thought, and it was spot on.

Since I hardly used metal weapons I didn't have much knowledge about then, but I muttered a simple question.

"What's Wootz Steel in the first place?"

"Ahh, Wootz Steel is... you could call it fantasy's Damascus Steel."

"O-oh. Well, I did hear of it somewhere, I think."

I was satisfied knowing that Wootz Steel was another name for Damascus Steel.

"So, Yun-kun, will you sell this to me?"

"From what I'm hearing, it doesn't seem like anything I can handle with my current 【Workmanship】's level, so I don't mind."

Then it's decided, and with that said I was able to trade 【Layered Coal】 at quite a high price.

"Hey, if you have 【Layered Coal】, sell me a Wootz Steel sword!"

"Unfortunately. My pride won't allow making a half-assed weapon like the first one I made. So, wait a little longer. I need time to grasp the trick to making Wootz Steel."

"Well then, we need to gather a lot of 【Layered Coal】. Yun! We're going to fetch some for my sake!"

"Don't be silly. My pickaxe's broken and all..."

When saying so, I turned my gaze towards the tip of the broken pickaxe, Magi-san had made a daring smile as if she was waiting for this moment.

"Fufufu, let me introduce a wonderful commodity to you, Yun-kun! A three-set of pickaxes made from black iron for any situation!"

She said so and what she took out, was a pickaxe made of black iron which was harder than iron. There were small, medium and large pickaxes which had weight and shape making it easy to use in each situation, even the handle was well thought of.

I lifted the black pickaxe's wooden handle and felt its heaviness, but there should be no problem with using it.

"Looks good, I want them."

"Then how about 500kG for the set?"

"I'll buy it."

Since it wasn't particularly expensive, I decided to buy it. Rather, it was an essential expanse for collecting 【Layered Coal】. Still, I felt like inflation had come seeing as 500kG seems cheap. The times where I struggled to earn 1000G felt nostalgic.

"I'll give these to you now in that case."

"I don't have enough on hand to pay in full, so I'll pay 250kG in advance and have Kyouko-san deposit the rest in the store next time."

"Yup, got it. Well, even if I don't get it, I can always deduct it from the consignment I have with you, Yun-kun."

Magi-san joked around, but I instructed Kyouko-san the NPC to make the payment for the pickaxe through the menu.

"Still, why do you have a pickaxe ready at such a good time?"

"Because these are spare pickaxes I made for myself. I said it earlier right. 【Layered Coal】 can be gathered in various high level zones, that is. In order to mine in those areas you need a pickaxe made from black iron."

Also, I got a large amount of ore in stock now. She said and winked to me. She must have meant that she made it with the Black Iron Ore I brought in.

"Thank you for purchasing Black Iron Pickaxes～. Now, the 【Fragment of Land Emperor Turtle's Shell】, right. Its my first time seeing this strenghtening material so I don't know what effect it has."

After we finished the trading procedure Magi-san breathed out shortly and looked at the next item.

"Then, how about we try the additional effect on some weak weapon? It's not a good idea to try it on the usually used one."

Since I didn't want to put an effect I don't know on my main weapon, I thought of checking it with an Iron Sword or something but...

"Yun-kun, at times like these you should use this."

Magi-san took out a weapon and raised it in front of me and Taku.

It was the axe Magi-san had acquired previously in the summer camp event which could hold up to fifteen effects.

I was reminded of the existence of the same magic remodelling weapon, the 【Wolf Commander's Longbow】.

"I normally use it to check the unidentified straightening materials. For now——it's a straightening material checker."

Isn't that different from how it's supposed to be used? Taku beside me retorted and heaved a sigh. I agreed that the usage method was different from the original one, but that was one of the ways to use it, I thought.

In the first place, Magi-san had a different battle axe as her main weapon.

"If you like the effect you can have it stay on the item, if the compatibility is bad, you can just erase it, it's waste-less. Yun-kun, can I start?"

"Yes, please go on."

I looked as Magi-san had used the strengthening material, 【Fragment of Land Emperor Turtle's Shell】 on her own remodelling weapon, an axe.

We immediately found out what was the the strengthening material's additional effect.

Stone-Axe Erupter – Volkaraxe 【Weapon】——magical axe carved from cooled down magical metal that's like flowing lava.

ATK+30 Additional Effect: ATK Bonus, Physical Attack Increase (small), Fire Element Bonus (medium), Damage Penetration (small), HP Absorption (minimal), Automatic Recovery (small), Durability Increase (medium)

After checking the stats of the weapon which had a new additional effect added, both Taku and I were at loss for words.

"The new effect is——【Durability Increase (medium)】, huh."

"Nonono, wait, certainly its good that we learned the material's effect is 【Durability Increase (medium)】, but what's with that large amount of effects!"

"That thing is a fraud considering the base specs. Clearly, it can already be used in live combat."

I raised my voice in surprise seeing the numerous additional effects I haven't seen before on the weapon and Taku had enviously looked at the remodelling weapon.

"It just turned like this when I left only valid effects on it. Oh right, I wanted to ask you for enchanting it, Yun-kun."

"Eh? Um, is that fine?"

To do it so simply, I added in puzzlement and used 《Item Enchant》 on Magi-san's remodelling weapon to add 【ATK Enchant】 to it, specializing it further in physical attack.

"Thanks, Yun-kun. What about the remaining one?"

"What about, you ask, I wonder myself."

One material was consumed for effect verification and one more was left. There was no need to decide here but...

"Then why not put it in Yun's pickaxe?"

"By pickaxe, you mean the Black Iron Pickaxe I just bought?"

I tilted my head, puzzled.

"Indeed. It's a tool you'll be using for a long time. Also, even if you do maintenance and grade-up the additional effect won't disappear and this way it won't break in the middle of gathering like this time."

In the first place, there was no point in adding 【Durability Increase (medium)】 into weapons or armour. If someone did put that effect into a weapon, the weapon would receive a limit to how much it can be improved.

In that meaning, it was a good idea to put it into a pickaxe which is not a weapon, but...

"Can it even be added into a pickaxe?"

"Pickaxe is a type of a weapon. Something like a variant of an axes and hammers."

"Also, Yun-kun's kitchen knife I made is also both a tool and a weapon. When I'm attacked during mining I swing my pickaxe to deal with the enemy."

I was convinced by Taku's and Magi-san's explanations.

And then, Magi-san strengthened the large pickaxe with 【Durability Increase】.

"Now, since I don't have enough 【Layered Coal】 to make a Wootz Steel weapon, can you bring me some more? Also, I want to 【Durability Increase】 for my own pickaxe, too."

"Understood. I'll concentrate on mining for now."

"Thanks. I'll give you some extra when purchasing them."

For the time being, I decided to mine for Blurite Ore of which there wasn't enough yet and the 【Layered Coal】.

"I guess I need to go confirm how is Gantz's and others' picking up of 【Climbing】 Sense before we proceed."

Taku stretched his back and a mutter leaked from his mouth.

Since it was the first time we mentioned it, Magi-san made a curious expression.

"【Climbing】 Sense?"

"Yeah, the place I we got Blurite Ore and 【Layered Coal】 is the cliff on the northern area and the highlands area on the other side..."

When I summarized the explanation about the highlands area and the super-dreadnought mob in it, Magi-san grinned as if she came up with something.

"Hey, Taku-kun. Can 【Climbing】 Sense be acquired easily?"

"Currently, teaching the Sense is centred on a player called Ivan. He's teaching several parties and acquaintances altogether."

"Then, can players with 【Smithing】 Sense be included in that? So we can run an operation for climbing Grand Rock."

Even if they don't climb up to the top, they could mine numerous mining points.

"What do you think?"

"Hm. I guess it's fine? I can hang around to teach and time is needed to examine under what conditions that Grand Rock starts moving."

"I'll organise it with 【Crafting Guild】 as a centre in that case, let's talk in detail later, Taku-kun."

"Feels like its turning into a really big deal."

While I listened in silence beside them, I somehow felt that the operation for conquering the highlands had become really important.

"Also, I wonder if I could ask you, Yun-kun to help me out."

"H-help out?"

"Well, I need to do some preparations on my side, so we'll speak about that too, at later time."

Magi-san winked to me, and the conversation had ended for today.

●

clank* *clank. I swung the pickaxe at the mining point and dug out the ore.

"Phew, that makes 100 of them. Mining those is quite harsh, these mining points are real hard."

I picked up the ore and looked up at the sky.

Above me, there was the towering rocky mountain and Cockatrices fling in the sky.

"It took a lot of time to gather those."

I accepted the request from Magi-san and continued to dig the mining points on Grand Rock's back and near the cliff.

At first I was worried about whether will Grand Rock roar, but it seemed like it happened only at fixed time and didn't happen when I was mining.

Still, since on the rocky mountain Cockatrices and on the cliff-side Aero Snakes and Bunker Bees attacked me, when fighting back my combat-related Senses level up unexpectedly well.

"The total of ore I gathered in three days is 144 pieces of Blurite and 101 pieces of 【Layered Coal】. Also, 8 of 【Fragments of Land Emperor Turtle's Shell】, huh. Means I was lucky when mining before."

With that said, it was just the third of the total amount of ore I dug up in three days. The other two was not so unusual ore like iron, silver, gems and black iron.

The 【Fragments of Land Emperor Turtle's Shell】 had a low probability of appearing and it was time-consuming to acquire it. Although it was a little disappointing that the drop-rate increasing effect of the 【Fairy Ring】 didn't have any effect, it was possible to collect a significant number of those over time.

"Now, it's almost the time I agreed on with Magi-san, I should go back."

First, I returned to the 【Atelier】 through the portal and from there, went to visit Magi-san's 【Open Sesame】.

"Magi-san! Hello."

"Oh, Yun-kun. Just on time."

Magi-san welcomed me with a wide smile.

"Sorry, it took three days to prepare."

"It's fine, but could you tell me what are we going to do?"

Three days ago, she didn't tell me any details so I once again asked what does she need help with.

"Back then Taku-kun was here you see. I don't intend on revealing this to anyone other than crafters I trust."

She said so and led me towards the workshop. And, inside——

"What is that?! What's with that furnace?!"

What I pointed out when I cried out, was the temperature on the Magic Furnace Magi-san had installed in her workshop. It should have been the same as the one installed in my own workshop, but the thermal power was completely different, it caused the air in the surroundings of the furnace to shake.

If not for the barrier around the furnace which shut away the heat in its vicinity, it would have scorched the entire workshop.

"I'll explain about it now. I want you to help with my smithing, Yun-kun."

"You say 'help with smithing', but I can't make weapons."

My 【Workmanship】 Sense allowed for making of accessories and while it could be used for refining ingots, it couldn't be used for crafting weapons which belong to 【Smithing】 Sense.

"Of course, I know that. What I want to ask you, is help with crafting Wootz Steel Ingots. We will strike the metal together——I want you to do joint hammering with me."

"Joint hammering?"

"That's right, I will use this big hammer to remove the impurities and increase the quality. And, you will be shaping it with a small hammer, as well as adjusting the position, Yun-kun."

What Magi-san passed to me as she said so, was a Black Iron Hammer for smithing.

Standing firmly, she swung the hammer she held in both of her hands. Certainly, while she changes between the hammers, the metal will cool off.

"So, what specifically am I to do?"

"First, I guess practice? We need to match ourselves perfectly. Also, in order to make Wootz Steel, we need to get used to the temperature in there first."

Saying so, Magi-san moved a step in front of the furnace.

Immediately after, I saw something that made me doubt my eyes.

"Magi-san! It's decreasing! Your HP!"

"Well, that's because the temperature is the highest I can get now."

She had turned around and smiled to me, but sweat appeared on her forehead.

"That's fine, but come back for now!"

I pulled back Magi-san, who had come up in front of the furnace. I also was assaulted by the hot air and my HP decreased faster than hers.

"How did the temperature go up this much?"

"Most of my MP went into the furnace, in addition to that, Fire Fairy increased the temperature and Treant Wood was used to fuel the fire. Though, its strong enough for players to receive damage if they aren't resistant to fire element."

Magi-san had 【Fire Element Talent】 Sense allowing to use fire elemental magic. Still, despite that she needed even higher temperature, what on earth is she making?

"Magi-san, are you really making just Wootz Steel Ingots?"

"Ahahaha, so you noticed after all?"

"Can't you make it with the same method you have succeeded before?"

"I don't want to use the method from before."

She said so and took out a large plate. It was a heavy iron, no, steel plate.

"Earlier, I used this thin steel plate and 【Layered Coal】 to make a one ingot. But, the result was a rough, seven-layered Wootz Steel Ingot.

"Wootz Steel's has characteristic is the unique, beautiful wood-grain pattern because of the multiple layers of metal overlapping. However, the amount of layers on mine was not enough, the temperature wasn't strong enough to allow bending it again."

"Then, the method now is...?"

"Mix steel and 【Layered Coal】, then bend it into many layers in in high temperature."

For every bend, the amount of layers doubles and, by repeating it you make beautiful Wootz Steel.

"So, Yun-kun. Will you lend me your strength and wisdom?"

"I understand, I'll support you however I can."

"Yun-kun, thank you. Now then, let's start joint hammering practice immediately!"

After saying that, Magi-san took out several ores and began preparations for smithing.

She purchased all the ore I have mined this time for using it as practice material this time.

"I put 【Durability Increase (medium)】 additional effect on mine and Yun-kun's tools, now, let's go!"

Magi-san, holding a hammer and I, holding a small hammer have set up as to face each other in front of the furnace.

The metal inserted into furnace melted and flowed into a mould.

"First let's start with practising something light like normal iron, then fine iron, silver, steel, black iron and then with Blurite."

"Understood. I'm ready any time."

Exposed to the extremely hot air from the furnace, Magi-san had swung her hammer down on the ingot taken out of the mold.

That was the signal for joint hammering.

There was a clear sound and sparks flying the bright red metal. While wiping sweat off my forehead, I struck the metal without taking my eyes off from it and matching Magi-san.

I swung down the Black Iron Hammer striking the iron to adjust it and then, Magi-san swung her hammer down once again.

Thanks to motion assist I knew what timing was optimal, but what was troublesome, was the damage dealt by hot air.

In the workshop, filled with the sound of metal being struck we overflowed with sweat. In the middle of it I excluded everything that disturbed me and concentrated on the heated iron in front of me.

And when it had began to cool down we returned it to the furnace, then once it had turned red again, we took it out.

Beginning with ordinary iron there was no problem with fine iron as well. We somehow managed with silver too, since I worked with it in my own workshop, but the first one was steel.

"Now, let's make a Steel Ingot."

"Magi-san, I don't know how to make a Steel Ingots though."

Magi-san was astonished hearing my words. In one hand, she held an inexpensive blue potion in order to replenish her HP depleted by the hot air, it looked to me like nothing other than a sports drink.

Well, let's leave that aside, about the method of making Steel Ingots...

"Ahh, steel is further refined from Iron Ingots you make from Iron Ore, you see."

Which means that steel is high purity iron with impurities further removed.

"That's why, the basics are the same as for metallic threads. However, a bit more power is needed."

She said so and put the Fine Iron Ingot we made earlier back into the furnace for refining, then struck the melted metal.

Magi-san hit the metal with her hammer and I used mine to reshape it, but because of my low ATK the ingot only rattled and didn't change its form. I put in all my strength to somehow fix it, but after I hit the metal repeatedly, it ended up as a failure.

"Ah..."

"cringg*, and at the same time we heard a sound of cracking, the mass of metal had turned into particles of light and disappeared.

"Aww... so there's a difference between mine and Yun-kun's ATK stat. Should I adjust my stats to balance it out?"

But by that amount the work time will lengthen, Magi-san muttered, but our aim was the high-level Wootz Steel. If we compromise in this moment, we won't be able to make a good ingot.

"It's all right, Magi-san. 《Enchant》——Attack!"

I put an ATK enchant on myself, raising my base stats.

Since enchant-type Sense's level has increased, the duration of enchants is longer enabling me to refine a several ingots over the duration of one enchant.

"I'll catch up to you with this. Now, next one!"

"You're right. From here on the ingot crafting difficulty will quickly increase, so we'll have to work hard with repeated practice of trial and error."

Then once again, we returned to refining a Fine Iron Ingot and Steel Ingot.

For the time being, we were able to make a Steel Ingot on our second try, but since Magi-san tried to match panicking me, we didn't proceed to the next ore and instead, continued to make Steel Ingots to match our breathing.

"This is the fourth one. About time we proceeded to Black Iron."

"Haa, haa... agreed. But first, a break."

Since we continued to stand in front of furnace endlessly releasing heat, both Magi-san and I were dripping with sweat.

To take a break, we moved outside the ward sealing off hot air.

Sweating even more than I did, from her face to her neck, collarbone and towards her chest, Magi-san's figure covered in sweat made me unable to focus my eyes. Magi-san's figure with sweat flowing down her exposed valley between her breasts caused me unable to focus my eyes. The skimpy cloth also sucked in sweat, making it see-through.

On the other hand, I too was dripping with sweat, but the cloth equipment had become only a little see-through.

While drinking a Blue Potion for HP recovery and re-hydration, Magi-san summoned her partner, Rickle, a wolf cub who wielded ice element.

"Ahh, cold air from Rickle feels amazing."

"How nice, I want some ice too."

Flushed, Magi-san was cooled off as she hugged the wolf releasing cold air from his entire body.

Rickle responded to my mutter with a woof, and made a piece of ice perfect for me to cool my neck with.

"Hyah, cold! But, feels great."

I held the ice Rickle created and pressed it against my nape, then a sigh leaked out.

Although the cold was comfortable, the ice melted and the water soaked my clothes, feeling a little uncomfortable.

"Uehh, I'm all wet."

"Ahahaha, so you did it after all, Yun-kun."

"Magi-san, did you know and kept silent?"

"I made the same mistake once before. That's why, to cool my body I hug Rickle like this."

After responding so, we decided to end the break and started to relay to each other what we felt during joint hammering.

"Yun-kun, how was the first joint hammering? Was it hard?"

“Well, it was. I'm worried that I'll hold you back."

“The results you put out were enough, Yun-kun. Also, it's a great help that you're adjusting your position for me to strike the metal easier. Any tips on how to do that?"

She asked me for tips, but there was nothing I could come up with. If anything...

“I guess I'm used to it."

“Used to? This is the first time you're doing joint hammering, right?"

"Yes, but I'm accustomed to matching the movements of others. Well, I guess that's because I don't have the skill to do stuff alone."

With a bitter smile, I spoke of my memories from childhood.

I often played with gamers, Taku, Myu and Sei-nee, but it didn't mean I was good at gaming.

But, I did remember how to manoeuvre in the confusion and match my movements to support my partners in team games.

And somehow, we have become able to win one game in a ten thanks to that.

This time I did the same, I matched my movements to Magi-san's movements who used motion assist and supported her however I could.

“So, in that kind of way I'm used to it, I guess?"

When I finished talking, Magi-san put a hand on her forehead and let out a long sigh.

“Substantial player skill is required for joint hammering, but to think there was such a reason. Come to think of it, whatever party it is, as long as they match their movements they become a force to be reckoned with, don't they."

“M-Magi-san? Are you okay?"

I fearfully called out to her as she continued to mutter to herself.

“If you're tired then how about we end it for today?"

“Ah, I'm fine I'm fine. I just had a glimpse of the lack of your self awareness on your high skills, Yun-kun."

“? Is that so?"

I wonder, which part of my skills is high? Even my Sense build is jack-of-all-trades and without specialization, I should have no especially conspicuous ability but...

“Now! Next, let's get enough practice with Black Iron and Blurite then assess what's necessary for crafting Wootz Steel Ingot!"

“Yes!"

Once Magi-san's motivation returned we got down to crafting ingots.

And, with the help of Magi-san's furnace I learned the quirks of the metal and making of the Black Iron and Blurite Ingots, then received some guidance on making accessories.

“That's right, just like that. To make an uniform ring you need to be especially careful when joining the parts. The gem pedestal can be made separately and joined in so it's all right."

“Haa, haa, phew... done!"

The method taught to me by Magi-san was more efficient than what I learned by myself and I was able to create rings made of Black Iron and Blurite.

The Black Iron ring was made simple. The Blurite ring used silver for the pedestal and edge, and made for being decorated with an aquamarine gem, it was consciously designed for a woman.

“Looks good."

“Thank you very much."

Black Guard Ring 【Ornament】 (Weight: 1)

DEF+12 Additonal Effect: DEF Bonus

Blue and Silver Mystic Ring 【Ornament】 (Weight: 1)

DEF+7 INT+3 Mind+12 Additional Effect: INT Bonus, Water Element Improvement (small)

I checked the stats of the two rings and said thanks to Magi-san. They had quite good effects. The Black Iron ring had purely defence bonus and the other one, in addition to magic bonus had an additional effect which was inherent to Blurite Ore.

Holding these in my hand, I started looking through my inventory for suitable strengthening material.

“【Black Guard Ring】 has physical specialization. And, the 【Blue and Silver Mystic Ring】 has magic specialization. Then, might as well enchant them so."

“Hey, hey. Yun-kun, are you going to give these accessories to someone as a gift?"

“? I didn't have any such plans in particular..."

In front of the furnace, Magi-san had wiped off her sweat, but the flowing sweat and the clothing clinging to her skin was sensational, so I quietly averted my line of sight.

“Ehh, you're lying. I mean, you don't intend on equipping those accessories yourself do you, Yun-kun."

“W-why do you think so?"

“Well, you averted your eyes when I spoke about it..."

It's a misunderstanding! I thought of shouting that, but I was presented another reason.

“Those accessories don't have unified design you see. Were it something you yourself would use, would have an unified design and decorations with yours, right."

I see, even if someone aligns expensive equipment together, if there's no unity it'll feel incongruous. She had a point, that would make me look like an upstart.

“So, it's for a gift? I thought. Just like back then with me."

While saying so, Magi-san raised the ring made from three overlapping circles she had on her finger, the 【Trion Ring】.

With a small, bitter smile I thought of gifting it and replied.

“Were I to give it to someone, it would be to Sei-nee and Myu. They're my precious family after all."

“Eeh, isn't there anyone else? Like, girls from Myu-chan's party. Also, girls like Luka-chan or Tobi-chan would exchange presents to each other, right?"

In fact, giving them as gifts to Sei-nee and Myu, as well as Lucato and the others would be a good idea, but making one for entire party's worth would be hard, I thought with a wry smile.

“Then, how about giving it to Taku-kun?"

“Why did Taku's name even appear?"

She grinned seeing my reaction.

“In Yun-kun's case, the member of the opposite sex you are most intimate with is your childhood friend, Taku-kun, right. So, I thought the Black Iron ring was for him."

“You're wrong. In the first place, I'm..."

『”Excuse me, is Yun here?”』

A man. When I was about to say it the same way I always do, I heard Taku's voice from the direction of 【Open Sesame】's store."

That moment, Magi-san made a wonderful smile.

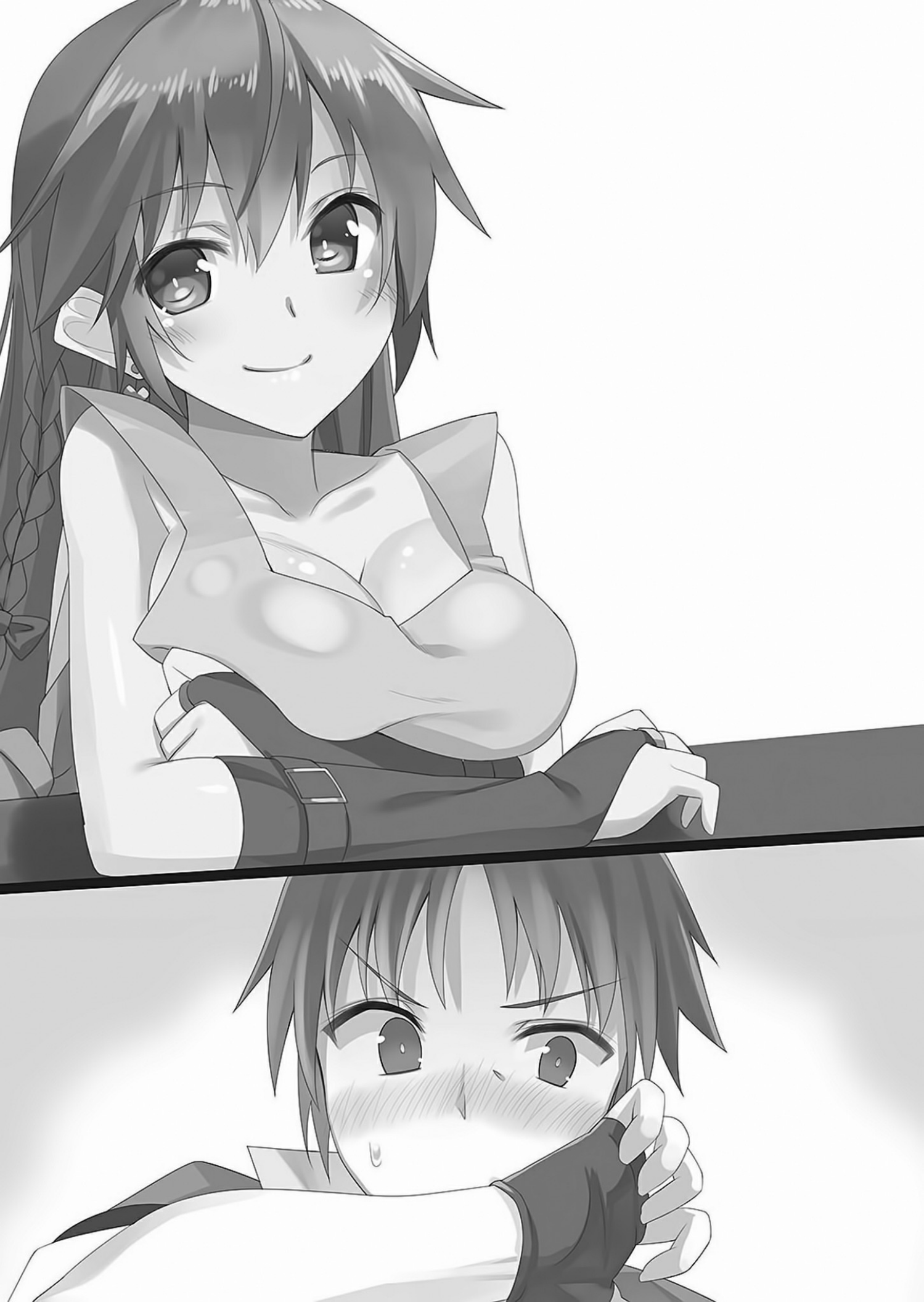
“Ohh, a customer for Yun-kun. I'll go to take a look."

Magi-san stood up and headed towards the door leading to the store. After watching her go, I noticed after a few seconds.

Until just now she was in front of the furnace and both her skin and clothes were wet with sweat. Going in public in such a state, let alone in front of a man would be bad, I felt.

“M-Magi-san, wait!"

I chased after her in a rush, but she had already entered the store.



What I saw after chasing her, was Magi-san's flushed appearance slightly covered with sweat and the figure of Taku, his overwhelming gaze was glued straight at her chest.

“Hey, Taku-kun. Would you like it if you received a present from a girl?"

“Eh, ha, well, I guess so."

“Magi-san!"

She had folded her arms under her breasts and leaning forward she asked Taku in a form of a counter-attack. As expected, this isn't good! I thought, and forced her to stop.

“Magi-san! Don't go in front of people in such strangely erotic state!"

“Aah, yes yes. Sorry."

“Seriously, stop that!"

For Magi-san's body's safety! I shouted in my mind as I pushed her back to the workshop.

Then, when I turned my gaze towards Taku, he had heaved a regretful sigh.

And, he turned his gaze towards me.

“W-what is it."

“No, I'm just thinking that you're covered in sweat too, Yun."

“?!! D-don't look!"

I hugged my own body as to block his line of sight.

“What is it? I just got curious as to what you're doing there in the back."

“We're just making ingots at smith's furnace!"

By the time I answered so, sweat disappeared and my equipped clothes dried naturally returning to its original state. Magi-san who also returned from the workshop seemed to have groomed herself and her sweat too, disappeared.

“Sorry. I wanted to see Yun-kun's reaction and ended up teasing you a bit, Taku-kun."

“Suddenly being greeted in such appearance gave me a serious shock."

“Really, stop with that. I nearly got a heart attack."

I turned limp inside, but Magi-san seemed satisfied seeing our reactions and smiled brighly.

“Well then, let's listen to what Taku-kun has to say."

She said so, and once again asked Taku for the reason he had visited 【Open Sesame】.

●

“So, what did you come here for, Taku."

“No, I went to 【Atelier】 searching for Yun and told 'went to 【Open Sesame】', I came to ask about the situation with Wootz Steel while at it."

“If that's the case, we plan to work on it after we get used to joint hammering with Yun-kun. However, I probably won't be able to make a sword immediately."

Knowing that, Taku was satisfied and didn't pursue the matter any further.

“Taku, why where you looking for me? Did something happen?"

“The timing of the next roar in the highlands has been found out."

“Seriously? Heck, only a few days have passed since then!"

Learning the rules behind these kinds of things usually takes over a week, they are working way too fast.

“The prediction is, that it's going to happen five days from now on, from three o'clock in the afternoon to six o'clock in the evening."

“Why do you even know that?"

“Verification mania players found out that flowers in the highlands peripheries change colour every day. We confirmed that the flower colour slowly changes in order from blue to yellow, orange and to red."

Verification maniacs are amazing, I was genuinely impressed by them. To discover something like that based on highlands flowers, I take my hat off to them.

“So, I came to ask Yun to adjust his time to be there at the time."

“Well then, to match it we'll aim for being able to make a Wootz Steel Sword."

“Understood."

Taku said what he came to say and although I was about to see him off, I called out to stop him.

“...Taku. Wait a moment."

“What is it? Yun."

“Just stop!"

I returned to the workshop to take 【Black Guard Ring】 and insert additional effects with the strenghtening materials I had on hand.

In order to give it highly-versatile effects I used 【Sting Bee Queen's Wing】 taken from Queen Bunker Bee and 【Fragment of Land Emperor Turtle's Shell】 taken from the Grand Rock, furthermore by using 《Item Enchant》 and at expanse of INT stat which Taku didn't use, I enchanted it with ATK and DEF.

Black Guard Ring 【Ornament】 (Weight: 1)

DEF+12 Additonal Effect: DEF Bonus, ATK Enchant, DEF Enchant, INT Cursed, All Bad Statuses Resistance (small), Durability Increase (medium)

It was a Black Iron ring with five bonus effects and one negative one. Normally it could hold only four additional effects but I balanced it out with cursed.

I forced it on Taku.

“Take this for now."

“This looks like a general-purpose accessory for a swordsman. Well, even if INT decreases it's not a problem. Though, there are actually bad status resistance-specialized pieces of equipment."

“If you don't need it you can give it to someone or whatever. I intend to give one to Myu and Sei-nee too."

“I didn't say I don't need it. In that case, I'll take it with gratitude."

This time, Taku left 【Open Sesame】.

When he had left I looked towards my left where Magi-san was, and saw her grin merrily.

“W-what is it?"

“No, I just thought that in the end, you passed it to Taku-kun."

It was a fact that I passed it to him, but when making it I had no other intention other than leveling up my 【Craftsmanship】 Sense.

But, I felt like denying too strongly here would mean something else to her. Good grief, I heaved a sigh, which had already become my habit.

Once Magi-san's rampant grinning had subsided, I turned towards her again.

“Now, that's enough for a break, next let's get to the main objective, Wootz Steel. First we'll make layers by bending the metal, creating distinctive patterns."

“Okay, I'll do my best."

Although there was a small uproar, we have crafted a variety of things as preparation for crafting Wootz Steel Ingot.

“The steps for making it is applying crushed 【Layered Coal】's powder on the Steel Ingot and fusing it in the heated furnace. Then, its stretched out by hammering, then once again coated, and a repeat of fusing."

Stretch it out as if making candies in order to make enough layers for Wootz Steel.

“Well then, let's begin!"

Along with Magi-san's instruction the hammer was swung down for the first time and thus, we began crafting a Wootz Ingot.

Hit by the large hammer several times, the Steel Ingot had expanded on the furnace, turning into a steel plate nearly three times as large.

When it had turned red in the heated furnace it was taken out and 【Layered Coal】 was applied evenly on its surface. It was returned back to the furnace and when it was confirmed it had melted, Magi-san and I quickly fused coal in with our hammer and large hammer. Then, we bent the softened steel plate on the anvil.

And, we struck the bent metal surface evenly with our hammers to fix it back to the shape of an ingot before stretching it out to a steel plate again.

Stretching the steel plate thin we applied 【Layered Coal】 evenly and fused it in, then folded it to create a distinctive pattern on the Wootz Steel, and when we repeated folding five times——

“!! Yun-kun, abort! We're aborting!"

Saying so, Magi-san stopped swinging her hammer and grasped my hand to drag me away from in front of the furnace.

“Yun-kun, look at your status!"

“Eh? ...hey, I'm dying?!"

I focused on work too much and forgot about the accumulating damage caused by furnace's heat. At that rate I would probably die in the middle of it.

“Here, Yun-kun. Let's wipe off the sweat and think of counter-measures. I think it would be dangerous for me too if I remained like that."

I wiped off the uncomfortable sweat with the towel Magi-san passed me and looked at the mid-crafting Wootz Steel Ingot. Since it was bend and not yet rejoined, the metal had cooled down and became just a piece of steel, causing it to be treated as a failed product and disappear.

“I'm sorry. Valuable Wootz Steel materials disappeared because of me."

“It couldn't be helped. In fact, if Yun-kun died the crafting would have failed anyways. But in that case, we need to get some fire element resistance. Since I'm using accessories which increase my statistics for crafting, I don't have any open slots I can use."

“In that case, I have something good."

I took out a single container and opened the lid. Inside, there was pale red cream.

"This is a cream temporarily increasing resistance to corresponding element——【Element Cream】. Its effect lasts for about two hours."

We have discovered that it lasts longer than 《Element Enchant》 when we tried it together with Taku.

“Oohh?! That's handy! And it has a sweet scent, too."

“I mixed a little bit of honey in it."

“Onee-san is impressed by this very feminine thing you've made."

Saying so, Magi-san took the cream in her palm and with accustomed movements she covered her face and neck, as well as other exposed parts like arms.

I too covered my body thinly with cream and when I stood in front of the furnace, the decrease of my HP was reduced.

“Still as hot as ever, but it seems like we can work for a long time now."

“You're right. This time, we'll make the real thing! Let's do our best!"

Once again she took out the materials and we started making Wootz Steel Ingot.

The steel was stretched into a plate and after applying 【Layered Coal 】 the plate was bent and coal was fused in.

We then repeated it making two layers from one, then four from two, eight from four, sixteen layers from eight layers, quickly increasing the number of layers of steel. The more layers there were the hardness and strength of the metal had increased making it difficult to process. We stretched it and bent using the weight of the heavy Black Iron Hammer.

And finally, we have completed it.

“Done! Sixty-four-layered Wootz Ingot!"

“Woahh, it has a beautiful wood-grain pattern."

The Wootz Steel Ingot made from a Steel Ingot had great toughness and durability after being folded many times.

“Thank you! It was thanks to Yun-kun that we made it!"

“T-that's not true... I was only helping out."

Magi-san held my hands and shook them strongly to convey her gratitude, but I got embarrassed having told so from the front.

As she moved closer to me, her chest and the scent of the 【Element Cream】's she had used, as well as the lustre of her skin wet with sweat were all bad for my heart.

“Yun-kun, you're always so humble."

“Now! From here on is where Magi the smith shows her skill. I'll be making a sword out of this Wootz Steel Ingot."

“Magi-san, I'll help you until the end."

“But, for Yun-kun to help means..."

“I'll manage the furnace's heat and use ATK enchant for support. Also, in case fire resistance drops off in the middle, won't it be necessary to use a fire element enchant?"

I want you to make a sword in your best state. Magi-san had perceived my feelings and nodded strongly.

“Well then, please do. Pour your MP into the furnace and maintain the current temperature."

“Understood. And, 《Enchant》——Attack!"

I cast a physical attack enchant on Magi-san and standing in front of the Magical Furnace, I held my hand out to it.

Pouring my own MP, I fuelled it to maintain the heat.

Moreover, do your best furnace's Fire Fairy, I said and passed a light candy I took out from the inventory to the fairy as well as inserted the Treant Wood Charcoal that was piled up beside the furnace.

“Preparations complete!

“Smith Magi, going in."

Then, Magi-san sat down in front of the furnace and after heating Wootz Steel Ingot in it, she swung down her hammer.

The Wootz Steel Ingot made by bending the metal was softened by heating it up and reshaped, making its form closer to that of a long sword.

I cast physical attack enchant on Magi-san to assist her in working smoothly. Also, I also repeatedly cast 《Element Enchant》 to compensate because 【Element Cream】's effect had expired long ago as I watched the sword being completed.

And, the last swing had come down, the long sword forged from Wootz Steel has been cooled down with 【Water of Life】.

“Did it succeed?"

“For now, yeah, I guess? What's left to do are small details like making a handle and sheath."

Saying so she raised the long sword's blade from the water and the rippling, beautiful wood grain pattern had appeared.

Steel's silvery-white and embedded 【Layered Coal】's black made the blade very durable.

Damascus Sword 【Weapon】

ATK+75 DEF+37 Additional Effect: ATK Bonus

Since it was newly-made weapon, there were few additional effects, but depending on the customer's preferences their number will increase.

“Finally complete, huh."

“Yun-kun, cheers for good work. I'll contact Taku-kun through friend call and consult on the additional effects, but before that, I have something to pass onto Yun-kun."

She said so and took out two wooden boxes from the shelf at the back.

Once she quietly opened them one by one, what appeared inside them were weapons.

One of the weapons Magi-san took out was a thick black and shiny knife made of Black Iron. It was a knife resembling a hatchet or an axe. The other one, was a single-edged beautiful blue katana, different from the clunky Black Iron one. It had a straight blade with a hamon pattern on it, the katana pursuing sharpness was made simple, without a collar.

“Magi-san, are these weapons?"

"They're your reward, Yun-kun. Its the thank you gift for Blurite Ore and joint hammering I mentioned before. Thinking of Yun-kun, I had them classified as kitchen knives."

"...kitchen... knives?"

No matter how I looked at it, they were a hatchet and a Japanese sword. The thick Black Iron hatchet had faint traces of similarly to Chinese kitchen knife, but the blade with straight, blue blade looked just like a Japanese sword.

Since it was a reward for delivering Blurite Ore, I guessed that it was made from Blurite Ore as well.

"The one made from Black Iron was made simply with emphasis on durability and attack power. On the other hand, it might be difficult to handle because of its heaviness. The other one, was made from Blurite Ore which is a magical metal, so after completing it holds an additional effect, try checking them."

Meat Cleaver – Heavy Black 【Weapon – Kitchen Knife】

ATK+65 SPEED -15 Additional Effect: DEX Bonus

Dismantling Knife – Blue Dancer【Weapon – Kitchen Knife】

ATK+55 Additional Effect: DEX Bonus, Water Element Bonus (medium)

The Meat Cleaver seemed like it was heavy and had a dull blade, but looked like the type to break things under its weight. It was so heavy it felt like it'll swing me instead.

And, the Dismantling Knife had a medium-level Water Element Bonus so I think its evaluation was quite high. Since the accessories I made out of the Blurite Ingot were low level, it looked like this must have been the difference between crafters, or maybe a water Element Stone was synthesized into the ingot beforehand, I had many guesses on this.

Both weapons had very high performance, in combination with the knife I already have——

——A speed-oriented, ordinary short knife.

——A power-oriented heavy Meat Cleaver.

——With handle that could be held with both one or two hands, the Dismantling Knife with long reach.

I guess it would be good to use each of the three knives depending on the situation, though its difficult to change weapons quickly in close combat. Oh right, I wonder if I can change weapons through the menu while in 【Sky Eyes'】 extension of experienced time. I started thinking about weapon combination with Senses.

“Magi-san, can I try swinging it?"

“Go on. It's yours after all, Yun-kun."

Told so, I timidly took the kitchen knife in my hand.

I held the heavy Meat Cleaver in my hand and swung it slowly. To the right, the left, then again to the right, I swung the knife both vertically and horizontally. Because it was so heavy, my entire body swung in its direction and swayed around, which was its drawback, but since it wasn't a weapon which required fine control it was good for holding in my left hand which wasn't my dominant hand.

Next one I lifted was the Dismantling Knife, it had a lustre similar to that of water reflecting light and could be wielded lightly, like extention of my own hand. However, since I didn't know how to use a

sword in the first place nor had any motion assist, it looked like amateur swordsmanship.

“Now, isn't it about time you started your preparations, Yun-kun?"

“By preparations you mean, for climbing Grand Rock?"

Now that Magi-san had succeeded in making a Wootz Steel Ingot sample, she would concentrate on raising her level and adjustment of the Wootz Steel Sword together with Taku.

But, as for what I'm going to do is...

“I heard a lot of players are going to gather in the highlands area. So, it's going to increase the demand for——

"Consumables. But they can buy those in other places... ahh?!!"

I recalled, that although it had gradually began to stabilize, there still wasn't enough of 【Revival Medicine】.

"Won't it be bad if you dawdle here and don't return immediately to increase production? You need to consider a sudden rush and increase in demand."

"T-thank you very much! I'll head back to the 【Atelier】 immediately to take appropriate measures!"

I put away the Meat Clever and Dismantling Knife I received from Magi-san in the inventory and left the 【Open Sesame】.

Since she had seen me off to the entrance, I thanked her for the experience I gained today and dashed back to the 【Atelier】.

The store I have come back to seemed like usual, but once I confirmed sales with Kyouko-san the NPC, it seemed like they were growing slightly.

Since then items continued to sell quickly and I replenished them over a short period of time using crafting skills, finally ending up in a predicament where there wasn't enough materials.

When I was troubled with what to do, the 【Atelier】's regulars who weren't going to participate in the highland area conquest have started to come to sell me the lacking materials directly.

Seeing this connection between players, I felt warm inside.

In the middle of all that, I prepared myself for Grand Rock climbing as well, until the day itself came.

Chapter 6 - The Grand Rock and The Cockatrice King

I entered the party of Taku's and the others and waited in the entrance to the highlands area which was nearby the Grand Rock. In there, there already were several dozens of players on standby who have come through the cliff in the north and were now chatting with each other.

When I saw that from time to time Taku's acquaintances approached and after exchanging two, three words they went away, I felt that he was very well known.

And, there was also a certain person who has approached me.

"Onee-chan! Let's do our best! We'll be aim for defeating as much mobs as possible on the ground and getting drop items!"

Saying so, Myu showed her thin arm's biceps enthusiastically.

"I'm fine with anything as long as I survive."

"Grr, your aspirations are too low! If anything, make defeating that huge mountain-like mob your goal!"

"That's way too reckless..."

I was shaken strongly by Myu as she continued to say things like "let's do our best" and "get some motivation". Meanwhile I looked over Myu's shoulder and nodded towards her party members. Just, only Rirei's gaze made me feel unexplainable danger.

Other than that, there were the elites from Sei-nee's and Mikadzuchi's guild, 【Eight Million Gods】.

"Ahh! Sei-oneechan came too!"

Myu immediately changed the target of her clinging from me to Sei-nee. As a result, Rirei's passionate gaze also shifted there.

"Oh, Sei-nee with the others came too."

「お姉ちゃん！　セイお姉ちゃんも、頑張ろうね！
私たちは地上のボスMOB引き受けるよ！」
「【登山】センスとるの大変だったのよ？」

"At short notice. We were told to get 【Climbing】 Sense to participate."

It was toughh. While Sei-nee said so nonchalantly, Mikadzuchi pierced the ground strongly with the rod she had on her shoulder and watching the highlands area with interest, she spoke to me.

"Any advice from the person who discovered this area first?"

"No way, I'd like some myself."

Good grief, I responded while sighing. It's not like I know all the mobs. You should ask this to players who verified it in advance. I said and, you're right, Mikadzuchi responded and smiled.

"Well, let's leave greetings at this, let's do our best both of us, Missy."

"I said, don't call me 'missy'."

We exchanged light greetings before separating.

At the same time Taku also finished saying his greetings and called out to me.

"Now, Yun. Done with your preparations?"

"I'm fine. What about you?"

"They're perfect. I got a new sword, too."

Saying so he showed the long sword with beautiful wood-grain pattern. For this time's highlands area's conquering there were several groups. Among them were players who aimed to climb onto the

Grand Rock, a group hoping to mine 【Layered Coal】 and a group aiming to subjugate the Cockatrice boss on top.

Also, other than the Grand Rock there were Iron Cows, Warlock Goats and Lightning Horse whose strength was unknown.

"What are we aiming for? Let's make our goal beating all kinds!"

"First, how about starting with Warlock Goat?"

"Then we, 【Eight Million Gods】 will aim for the Iron Cow."

"You're right. Let's stick to the schedule."

Nervous, players spoke with each other about how they scatter and what enemies they are going to defeat enemy to relax themselves.

Then, once the colour of the flowers on the peripheries of the highlands area has changed from orange to red——

『"VVUUOOOOOOOOO——"』

A growl like a siren had sounded and the Grand Rock carrying a mountain roared in the highlands.

The atmosphere which had started loosening disappeared and everyone braced themselves at once, players have started running through the highlands one after another.

The battle in order to progress even a little more in combat against boss mobs before the normal mobs with Anger bad status gather from the peripheries of the highlands, had started.

"Amazing. This is——"

"Yun! We're charging towards the Grand Rock through the closest possible route!"

While I stood there overwhelmed by the atmosphere, Taku's voice pulled back my consciousness, then at the same time as I put speed enchant on all members, we started running.

As we rushed through the highlands, a group of mobs nearby had hindered our movement.

"Geh... a herd of cows, huh."

Many players who caught themselves up with Steel Cows, were blown away and crushed.

Was the herd of cows to proceed straight forward, we would come in contact with them soon.

"——【Eight Million Gods'】 elite! Forward!"

A powerful female voice had resounded strongly in the highlands. With her wine-red hair swayed by the wind, there was Mikadzuchi. Standing behind her and raising her wand was Sei-nee with her conspicuous light blue hair.

And, poising their weapons as to prevent the Steel Cows from moving on, were elite players of 【Eight Million Gods】 in a horizontal row formation.

"This is nothing compared to Garm Phantom's charge! Mobile troops, attack from the left and right to strand them, then return!"

"We, the mage troop are preparing our magic! Activate it at the same time the mobile troop moves away!"

Mikadzuchi raised her voice loudly as she spearheaded the assault and Sei-nee, who gave out instructions from behind to support Mikadzuchi. And so, 【Eight Million Gods'】 elite players have suppressed the herd of Steel Cows.

"Sei-nee..."

"I'm participating with 【Eight Million Gods】, but you give your all too, Yun-chan."

"Yeah, I'm off!"

As Sei-nee waved her hand lightly with a soft smile I turned my back to her and started running. The simultaneous attack of the mages had illuminated the highlands brightly.

Slipping by the battle of mobs and other players, we headed towards the Grand Rock's back.

From time to time mobs have slipped by the players and assaulted us, but Taku and Gantz have instantly dealt with them and we proceeded.

Also, whenever Mage Goats have used magic from the distance, Minute and Mami-san blocked it with defensive magic, whenever Cockatrices attacked from the sky I shoot them down one after another on the move with my arrows.

Kei, as the rearguard had bashed the mobs coming from behind with his shield to strand them in one place before dashing away.

"As I thought, having six in the party rather than just five makes it easier, less burden for each member! Also, Yun-chan is cute!"

"You're right! Having what we lacked join in makes the party move well! And, Yun-chan is so cute, too!"

Even among all this confusion Gantz and Minute joked around. Certainly, the cooperation in the party wasn't bad, but in the first place, I didn't team up with Taku's party too often.

"Don't talk too much. Grand Rock's right in front of us. Let's prepare to get on it."

Seeing that, Kei cautioned them. While trying to appease him, Mami-san had protected us from the Mage Goats' magic precisely with a barrier of wind.

"Now, let's get on it!"

As we approached the Grand Rock who caused the earth to rumble, any signs of mobs around us have disappeared and they only looked at us angrily from afar.

In the middle of multiple players who had a hard time trying to get on top of Grand Rock, Taku and Gantz have jumped ahead.

In order to receive us, after ensuring a route we can climb together the six of us, they sent us a signal.

Following them, were the healer Minute and mage Mami-san who extended their arms in order to be pulled up.

"C'mon! Grab my hand!"

"Y-yes!"

"I know. But, its quite difficult to get the timing right."

Mami-san panted heavily and desperately caught her breath as she ran by the Grand Rock, but was quite unable to find a good timing to jump on. Meanwhile, Minute had kicked off the ground strongly to jump and was pulled in by Taku's and Gantz's hands.

Unable to grasp the timing, I need to go next, Mami-san muttered shaking her head back and forth.

Seeing her movements, skipping as she ran like an elementary schooler and being unable to grasp the timing, do your best, I cheered on her in my mind.

But, my cheer and expectations were betrayed in an unexpected way.

"Mami, don't force yourself. Excuse me."

"Ehh? Kei! Let me down!"

From behind her, Kei had scooped Mami-san up down from her feet upwards.

Despite wearing heavy equipment, he continued to run while holding a petite girl in addition to that.

"Kei! Let me down! It's embarrassing!"

"You'll bite your tongue. Also, hold my neck with your arms so that you don't fall."

"Eh, kyah!!"

The normally taciturn, large man holding a girl in glasses in princess carry with only one hand and increased the speed at which he ran.

He ignored Mami-san's embarrassed and surprised, cute scream and leaped all at once using his warrior's stats.

The two were able to jump on the Grand Rock, albeit a little closer than Taku and Gantz did.

"You're last, Yun!"

"Y-yeah..."

Kei's surprisingly aggressive, I thought and kicked off the rock on top of the Grand Rock and grasped Taku's hands to be pulled up.

At the same time, the Grand Rock moved its huge leg, making the entire mountain shake.

"Woops... you okay?"

"...I'm fine. Rather, how is Kei and Mami-san?"

Retaining the momentum from being pulled, my head resulted with my head pressing onto Taku's chest, I didn't feel anything special, but two who went up ahead of us were bothered by it.

One stage below us, Kei helped Mami-san climb up by lifting her, she was also pulled by Minute from above. Afterwards, Kei too climbed and everyone had rejoined together again.

"Kei, what embarrassedly-happy things you're doing! Explode already!"

"No, um. ...sorry."

"Eh, uhm... I didn't dislike it, really. I was just surprised... um, thank you."

As Mami-san responded muttering quietly, Kei embarrassedly scratched the back of his head.

After seeing that, glaring at Kei, Gantz jabbed at him lightly. Seeing his appearance like envy incarnate, the party members smiled bitterly.

"Taku, what are you laughing at! You hugged Yun-chan when pulling her up! You're a criminal as well!"

"HAa? But Yun is... uh, hey..."

Taku looked at me with a complex expression. I somehow understood what he wanted to say. In game my character model is female, but I'm a man in real. That's why, we don't feel anything special even if we're close like that but...

"C'mon what! Exuding a atmosphere as if you're relaying something between yourselves! You have three beautiful sisters as childhood friends, because Yun-chan was too close she turned into a normal existence to you?! Damn, enjoying youth, damn you——"Gantz, shut up."——?!!"

When I tried to correct the facts, Minute smacked the back of Gantz's head with the mace to shut him up.

I lost the opportunity to correct them again, I heaved a sigh thinking so, that's when a dazzling flash had appeared on top of the hill and a roar had shook the air.

"W-what was that?!"

"That's not a normal boss battle! Yun, look it up!"

Once the flash subsided I looked towards the field and confirmed the cause of the occurrence.

Bright flashes ran through the highland Myu and Sei-nee were fighting in flashes, after the third explosion I found the existence that caused them.

"The guys who picked a fight with Lightning Horse have disappeared in an instant."

Literal lightning had ran through, wiping off entire groups of players at once. Even if someone luckily survived, before they even realized the Lightning Horse circled around them and struck them with lightning directly from behind.

"...seriously?"

"He's stronger than Iron Cow and Warlock Goat. Heck, the flickering hurts my eyes."

The 【Sky Eyes】 had far-sightedness performance, but intense light blinds me in exchange. This time, both the flash and roar happened in the distance so I managed to confirm it by controlling the amount of light passing by holding out my hand to block it.

Taku looked my way, seeming to want to know more about the situation, but there was something that interfered.

"Taku, Cockatrices are coming from the upper left!"

White bodies could be seen well under the bright sky. Kei was the first one to notice them and warned everyone.

"I'd like to observe Lightning Horse's movement a little longer but... Yun, we'll give up for now!"

"Got it! I'll go first then!"

I immediately looked away from Lightning Horse and aimed my arrow towards the Cockatrices.

As the number of Cockatrices further increased, Kei activated a skill.

"I'm here! ——《Hate Action》!"

Purple ripples have spread from his body and wrapped around Cockatrices' bodies.

Cockatrices who entered berserk state because of Grand Rock have all targeted Kei.

"Minute. We're intercepting them."

"My preparations are done!"

Minute and Mami-san fired their magic at the Cockatrices assaulting Kei.

While hindering Cockatrices' attack with a barrier of wind, Mami-san shot them down one after another.

Then, once Cockatrices passed through the barrier Minute shot them with rays of converged light, the ones who have slipped through that were brought down by Taku's, Gantz's and Kei's attacks.

I aimed from a distance at the Cockatrices who were unaffected by Kei's skill, shooting them down with my arrows.

"We got distracted by the Lightning Horse, but the battle has already started all over the place."

When we looked up at the rocky back of the Grand Rock, like white grains, Cockatrices took off from it one after another and assaulted the players rising up on the mountain road.

"Now then, others have started climbing up. We need to catch up to them."

Everyone nodded in response to Taku's words and we started walking.

Our aim, was the Grand Rock's summit. I glared up at the unexplored location.

•

We quickly climbed up the Grand Rock's back while repelling the attacking Cockatrices one after another.

Since it was difficult to fight in this irregular enviornment, Mami-san, Minute and I remained in the rear, and in the vanguard Taku, Kei and Gantz stood in the vanguard prepared for attacks. We progressed in two rows.

Divided into two groups, each of the vanguard protected one of the members from the rear.

"Taku, Cockatrices are approaching from lower left! There's four of them!"

Locating Cockatrices with the combination of 【Sky Eyes】 and 【See-Through】, I shot an arrow pre-emptively, but even though I took one down, there were three remaining.

"Kei, take care of it!"

"Leave it to me! ——《Hate Action》!"

Kei invoked the skill to spread the purple ripples and by doing so, he increased the approaching Cockatrices' hate value towards him.

The taunt-type skill 《Hate Action》 was a skill that increased the hate value towards the player in the surrounding hostile enemies. In what way is it different from the same shield-type skill 《Calling Shield》? It seemed like like there was a difference in usage or the effectiveness.

Leaving the hate management to Minute and I, Taku and Gantz, as well as Mami-san had defeated Cockatrices one after another.

"Yun, nice scouting!"

"I'm hardly doing anything. Kei's doing the most work. Rather, everyone okay?"

After confirming the berserk Cockatrices attacks have subsided, it looked like they were a little tired of combat in irregular enviornment.

The geographical disadvantage didn't allow us to take initiative in combat.

Because of the damage and the unfamiliar footing, our advance was slow.

"Taku, what do we do? Should we take a break soon?"

"You're right. It seems like we climbed up half-way already and we have no idea if the road continues further. We'll rest a little once we find enough space."

Taku had accepted my proposal and we quickly found a place to take a fifteen minutes break in.

Normally in the party I would mine some ore, but since we didn't know when will Cockatrices attack, I didn't want to take such risky actions. I reluctantly sat down to take a rest and took out the fruits I previously gathered in the forest.

As Minute and Mami-san unconsciously stared at those fruits, Taku and I looked at each other.

『"Yun. Sorry, but could you share some? I think it would increase their motivation."』

『"I wouldn't monopolize fruits in a place like this. I didn't intend leaving them only for myself."』

After Taku connected with me using friend call, wary of the surroundings, I held out 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】 and 【Mountain Apples】 to the two.

"Sweet things are best for tiredness, is what they say. Also, it's best to recover satiety whenever it's possible."

Receiving it, Minute and Mami-san first tried 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】 and made pleased expressions, then wrapped their both hands around 【Mountain Apples】 and started eating with their small mouths.

I passed sandwiches to Gantz and Kei so that they can eat while maintaining caution, then poured some tea for Taku from a bottle into a cup.

"You sure are attentive, Yun."

"Actually, I did prepare as much as I could beforehand."

Potions and Revival Medicine, Bad Status antidotes, food, I had various items in the inventory with me.

"As expected of a self-proclaimed support character."

Smiling, Taku drank the black tea all at once. After putting away the cup he returned to me I also put some 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】 in my mouth, regaining vigour thanks to the sweetness.

And, once the fifteen-minute rest finished, we started climbing again aiming for the top.

On the way, we found players who chose to climb using the shortest route rather than use the mountain route and were now struggling. We also warned those below us about the Cockatrice attacks as we climbed up at our own pace.

We steadily proceeded forward, careful not to drop off because of the intermittent shaking caused by the Grand Rock's movements.

We took a repeated breaks and in addition to 【Cold Crimson Glory Vine】 and 【Mountain Apples】 I also took out 【Tou Fruit】 and passed them to others. Although 【Shiyu Fruit】 wasn't that delicious without processing, 【Tou Fruit】 was like a sweet and soft apricot, everyone ate as many of them as there were.

"Ahaha... I need to collect some again."

I muttered so during the break, and soon afterwards we have climbed two thirds of the Grand Rock.

We could see Cockatrice nests here and there on the rocks, but since it seemed as if there was something like an invisible wall between the middle and the upper part, Cockatrices have returned in the middle of it.

"Which means that up there, there's the Cockatrice boss mob, right. Everyone, focus as we move on. Kei and Gantz, protect your partners well!"

Gantz winked to Minute and Kei held out his shield as to hide Mami-san behind it.

I also moved near Taku's back and looked up towards the top, but was unable to confirm Cockatrice boss' appearance.

As we proceeded carefully, we heard the sounds of fierce combat of players who were ahead of us which echoed from the mountain road one level above us.

"Seems like someone's fighting above."

"Which means, the Cockatrice boss mob can be up there——?!"

When I looked up, I saw something lose its footing and be knocked off.

" "Everyone, stick close to the rocks!" "

We did so, and a player had fallen down pulled by gravity, passing beside us.

Taku and I raised our voices at the same time, then everyone clung to the mountainside.

"——
AaaaAAaaAaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA————"

The player did not possess the ability to fly and did not have any skill allowing him to stop the fall, as a result they momentarily fell downwards.

My eyes met with that of an unknown player for just a moment. They had a stiff expression caused by fear as they fell.

The moment Taku stopped pressing against my back, I reflexively took a step towards the cliff.

"Yun. Don't go there!"

I slipped by Taku's hands as he tried to stop me and using 【Sky Eyes】 I peeked from below the cliff.

When I did that, a white mass had grazed right in front of me. I looked at it from behind its back.

"Yun. Come back!"

"Y-yeah..."

While I focused on the expression of the falling player, it seemed like Taku paid attention to other details. That is, the thing that chased the player.

Since I relied on my Senses for scouting I was late to notice it.

And ahead of where I looked up——

『"KUkueeeeee——"』

The presence on the cliff had emitted a high-pitched voice. Ripping through the wind at high speed, it held something big in its legs and was hovering.

It was a huge but slim chicken with a white body. It had a distinctive yellow crest and a serpent's tail. The boss mob spitting out flames from its mouth——the Cockatrice King had appeared.

I looked at the boss mob's leg and saw it had seized the body of the player who was falling just earlier.

The player was already limp from the fear of falling and didn't show any reactions. The Cockatrice King put in a lot of strength into the leg he held the player in, causing the player in front of us turn into particles of light and disappear.

Seeing this shocking scene right in front of me, I was unable to react immediately.

"A-aah..."

As a hoarse voice spilled out from my mouth, the Cockatrice King flapped his wings and caused a whirlwind which assaulted us.

The attack which didn't aim anywhere in particular had turned into a gust of wind and struck my back behind the cliff.

"Ah..."

It was an attack I would withstand if I clung to the rocks. However, because I stood up I was thrown into the air.

Without footing and not holding onto the lifeline, I flailed my arms in mid-air.

In the experienced time stretched by 【Sky Eyes】 the scenery felt like I was falling slowly in zero gravity, and in middle of it I could see Taku run my way.

What an idiot, he should just give up on me. While I thought so and Taku grasped my hand, the experienced time had returned to normal.

"Hh-hkyaahhh——"

In the middle of the two of us being thrown into the air a scream had come out from my mouth, and at the same time Taku had pulled me to himself with one hand and pierced his sword into the rocky surface in front of us with the other.

Our fall decelerated along with a crunchy, unpleasant sound, but the sword was unable to withstand it and broke.

However, for that moment my scream ceased and it was long enough for me to think.

"——【Clay Shield】.——《Mud Pool》!"

The Magic Gem I threw below had created a horizontal earthen wall which extended from the rock where the gem triggered. Then, I used earth element magic's 《Mud Pool》 so that it works as shock-absorbent material into which the two of us fell.

An impact passed through my body. Although it seemed like my consciousness was slipping away, the mud on the earthen wall suppressed the impact and we fell on the mountain road one level below.

"....."

"...Taku, you alive?"

"There is no answer, it's just a corpse."

"If you can say jokes, you're all right."

The emergency use of the 【Clay Shield】's footing and 《Mud Pool》 for absorbing the impact, the item and magic were able to suppress the damage, but we lost more than half of our HP. Especially Taku's HP had decreased to near-death state of 10% HP left.

"C'mon Taku. I'll heal you with a High Potion, but can you move immediately?"

"Yeah, status-wise there's no problem. A blessing in disguise, it seems like I didn't receive any bad status."

"Bad status?"

"We were lucky we didn't receive a 【Stun】 status from the fall damage. Were we unable to move, we might have been taken out by Cockatrices right now."

There was the temporary bad status resistance from the fruits we've eaten just earlier. Also, the 【Black Guard's Ring】 I passed to Taku might have had its effect as well.

"Geh, we fell to the middle of the mountain."

"Seems like it."

"Geez, Taku, you're too reckless. You're the party leader, you should have abandoned me."

"HAa?"

Taku furrowed his eyebrows in response to my mutter, but not noticing that I continued to speak.

"I'll retire here. If you use enchants and strengthening items, you'll be able to break through the herd of Cockatrices and re-join Gantz and others."

"Wait a second. Why would I leave you here."

"I would be a burden to you. Also, I can pass some time by mining ore——"

"Yun!"

Unable to hide his dispersement Taku grasped my shoulders.

"I called you because you're needed, Yun. You're needed——so I don't want you to retire here."

You should leave that kind of passionate persuasion for girls. I thought, appalled.

"Good grief, I'm being pulled around by you again. Try having some consideration for me, trying to keep up with gamers."

"Which means..."

"I'll go along with it until the end."

I sighed in response to Taku's persuasion. That said, since we fell near the middle we hadn't enough time to climb up normally.

"From here on, it's hard work. Let's go, Yun."

"It's all right. Let's use 《Clay Shield》 to make footing and climb up at the shortest possible course!"

In order to advance faster than normally using the spiral mountain road, I created footing artificially.

"Let's go! ——《Zone Clay Shield》!"

I created ten side-alternating earthen walls extending from the rock.

We equipped ourselves for climbing and using a lifeline, we climbed up the earthen walls.

"Taku, Cockatrices are coming!"

"Let's charge through!"

I shortened the distance by creating earthen walls several times and Taku had preceded me to cut down the Cockatrices who appeared by the border between the upper and middle part of the mountain.

Since Taku cut down many Cockatrices he gathered their hostility on himself and all of them have headed to attack him.

"Outta way! ——《Zone Bomb》!"

Although I couldn't use my hands when climbing, I could use magic. I blew away four Cockatrices I caught within my line of sight with simultaneous explosions.

By repeating that, we forcibly broke through and arrived in the upper layers.

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Once we arrived in the upper layers, we saw magic and skills flicker everywhere, shining with bright colours.

"Taku! Where's Gantz and others?"

"No clue. But there's several Cockatrice Kings here."

Judging by the positions from which light was emitted, Cockatrice Kings must have been waiting at the end of each mountain route.

Now that we had no idea on which path is Gantz and the others, if we climb poorly we'll get caught up in another party's combat.

"For now, let's climb up and check them up——?!!"

A shadow had appeared at the cliff in response to which Taku and I clung closely to the rocky mountain, assuming its a Cockatrice King.

And, that shadow had called out to us with a voice of an acquaintance.

"Phew, I didn't think you two would be falling down, but it was even more unexpected that you would recover by forcibly breaking through the shortest route."

"Thanks to that enemy numbers have become scarce and we were able to pass as well so it's all right, isn't it? Miss 【Material Merchant】."

"Emily-san! And Magi-san too!"

What the two were riding on, was a mob that looked like a centipede with multiple transparent wings. It must have been a result of using 【Synthesis】 Sense to combine a centipede with several insect mobs, it was a centipede mob with a wide body capable of flying in the sky as if undulating.

The two landed with their flying centipede beside us.

"Why are you two here?"

"I was invited here by Emily-chan. I want as much material for Wootz Steel as possible, you know."

"And I'm doing my work as 【Material Merchant】. Experimenting with flight-type synthetic mob and acquiring materials."

But well, we noticed you two falling in the middle of it, she added.

"Well then, Emily-chan. Recover me later, kai."

"Got it. I'll go up for now then. C'mon you two, get on."

" "......? What do you mean?" "

Seeing Emily-san encourage us to ride on the back of the flying centipede, both Taku and I tilted our heads in puzzlement.

"You're rejoining your party, right? It'll be faster to look for them from above with this."

"Thanks, that's a great help."

Taku jumped on the back of the flying centipede without hesitation. I also fearfully rode behind him and I entered my fingers in the gaps of the shell to hold on.

"I will only deliver you. Also, I'll have Taku-kun pay for it later."

"Why am I the only one paying! Well, as long as its reasonable!"

"Well then, let's go all at once!"

According to Emily-san's instructions the flying centipede started to fly vertically, aiming for the summit. Seen off by Magi-san, we rose above the square with Cockatrice King boss mobs and started to look for Gantz and the others.

"Where's everyone?"

"Taku, there. 《Zone Enchant》——Defence, mind!"

In the place we looked down to, Kei raised his shield desperately receiving the Cockatrice King's attacks.

At the same time as I prioritized double defence enchant on Kei, Taku jumped off the flying centipede.

"Hey, Taku?!"

Taku jumped using the flying centipede's back as a scaffold and leaped straight at the Cockatrice King, then pierced him with the sword using the momentum of his fall.

"Now, it's my comeback! Let's beat the boss right away!"

"Taku, Yun! You're late!"

Holding his shield, Kei called out. Gantz, Minuet and Mami-san also spoke happily seeing our return.

Since I was unable to do things as reckless as Taku, Emily-san approached the rearguard with the flying centipede and landed on the ground.

"Thank you, Emily-san."

"It's fine. I'll retreat before I'm caught up in combat."

She said so and the flying centipede undulated greatly as she dove downwards.

I once again looked at Gantz and the others facing Cockatrice King boss mob.

The Cockatrice King had about 60% of his HP remaining. The party was able to damage it in a stable manner under the lead of temporary leader.

"Can it be that we weren't needed?"

"No such thing! I'm happy that Yun-chan came back!"

Minute had greeted us. And, Mami-san also nodded while firing magic at Cockatrice King.

"Still, to think you'd come back in such a short period of time. And, just now..."

"Ahahaha... that's, well, I'll explain it step by step later."

Kei's gaze was turned in the direction Emily-san had left towards with her flying centipede. Taku rejoining the party had a big influence on the battle, but Emily-san seemed to have left plenty of an impression. We'll have to explain later.

"Now, Taku, what do we do from here on?"

Although Kei served as a temporary party leader, he tried to return the role to Taku, but was stopped.

"Continue leading, Kei. I came late, I'll move as just a party member."

"...got it. Yun and Mami in the middle, everyone else form a circle for anti-air defence! Yun and Mami focus on anti-air attack, Minute focus on light magic barrier."

At the same time Kei gave instructions, the Cockatrice King escaped into the sky and aimed to attack from there.

Everyone surrounded Mami-san and me, facing towards the Cockatrice King. Standing in the centre the two of us shot arrows and magic, but the Cockatrice King continued to avoid the attacks in an agile manner incongruous to his chicken appearance.

"Withstand the attack! ——《Wind Guard》!"

Holding his shield Kei used an Art which increased the entire party's defence, I matched the enchants with it at the same time in preparations for the Cockatrice King's storm.

Immediately afterwards a wide-range breath attack had come from the Cockatrice King's mouth and raged in the surroundings.

Minute's defensive magic and the circle made by vanguards has received it, protecting the rearguards in the centre.

When the breath attack weakened, Minute and I used recovery magic and potions to recover vanguard's HP, who dissolved the circle.

"Yun. Drag him down! Taku and Gantz, attack him the moment he falls!"

"Roger. —— 《Rapid Fire Bow - Second Form》!

I predicted the Cockatrice King's movement in the air and continued to shoot arrows continuously. Moreover, they were arrows synthesized with 【Paralysis】, 【Sleep】 and 【Stun】 bad status drugs in order to drag the boss down to the ground.

"Let's go, Gantz!"

'Yeah, its our chance!"

While the Cockatrice King fell to the ground and was unable to move, Gantz and Taku launched continuous attacks. Gantz dealt damage by using his entire body to attack and Taku chopped enemy up with the Damascus Sword.

Kei, in order to keep protecting the rearguard had joined the attack by using long-range Art. Mami-san and I used magic and arrows as to fill the gaps in the vanguard's attacks.

Shortly after the bad status on the Cockatrice King was released and he tried to escape to the sky.

"Vanguard return and prepare for breath!"

Again Taku and Gantz returned to form a circle, but once the Cockatrice King's displayed new movement once his HP decreased to a low value.

"——!! Everyone, get away!"

The Cockatrice King flew towards the remade circle from above. We rolled away in order to dissolve the close formation, but I received a kick to my shoulder from the rampaging Cockatrice King and was blown away.

"?!! My bow!"

The longbow I had in my hand was blown away towards the cliff by the momentum. In an instant our party's cooperation had broken down and the Cockatrice King aimed for Minute, the healer.

"Minute! Run!"

While Gantz's shout echoed, I slipped in between Minute and Cockatrice King's raised-up leg.

The blow of the swung-down leg resulted with a dull sound like that of something striking a thick, iron plate.

"——Yun-chan?!"

"Oww, as expected of a Black Iron kitchen knife. It's really sturdy."

Although I staggered after receiving Cockatrice King's blow, I somehow was able to catch the attack using the the side of the Meat Cleaver as a shield.

I didn't have the bow within my reach and the party's cooperation was broken. But——

"——It's not like I can only support everyone from the rear guard! I can become a living wall in case of an emergency, too!"

I raised my voice and cleaved with a huge swing using the kitchen knife, the Cockatrice King received the blow with a kick and its wings.

Even though I was pushed back because of my lacking attack stat, I avoided and parried skilfully using my high DEX as I waited for the party members to rebuild their postures.

"Yun, continue attacking together with Taku!"

Kei and Gantz finished preparations for protecting Minute and Mami-san. However, thinking of the Cockatrice King's remaining HP, Kei instructed me to continue attacking the boss and finish him off with Taku.

"Let's cut his head off in that case!"

With Taku's participation, our attacks have surpassed those the Cockatrice King had dished out.

And, avoiding the Cockatrice King's attacks I closed right under it, then slashed his neck with the thick Meat Cleaver. The brute slash wasn't enough to cut completely and stopped in the middle of his neck.

Since I hadn't the skill allowing me to pull out the knife from Cockatrice King's neck, I easily let go of it and took out the Dismantling Kitchen Knife from my inventory.

"Yun! Let's decide this! Match my attack!"

"Got it."

During the 【Sky Eyes】 extended experienced time, I used the Dismantling Kitchen Knife to carve the Cockatrice King's chest as Taku released his own slash. And then, with a further swings together with Taku, we engraved another slice on the enemy's back. The matching attack had received bonus damage for a chain attack and dealt large amount of damage to the Cockatrice King.

Then finally, during the time Taku and I attracted the boss to ourselves, Mami-san finished preparing her strongest magic and released it at the Cockatrice King.

『"KUKEEee——"』

The Cockatrice Kings final death throes came out from the middle of the magic inferno and were gradually erased by the flames momentum.

As a boss he could be said to be one of the weaker ones, but after so much happened I was tired.

Once I recovered the Meat Cleaver that was pierced into the Cockatrice King and the longbow which was blown away. I can finally catch a breath, my head was full of this thought.

Epilogue - The Mysterious Resting Place and the Inside Body Dungeon

"Oh, Grand Rock's rampage started to subside."

I looked at the sinking sun from the back of the Grand Rock and leaned the Black Iron Pickaxe against my shoulder.

After defeating the Cockatrice King boss, all mobs that respawned including the boss have become non-active mobs, but only towards the parties that killed a Cockatrice King.

Once we realized that, Taku and the others have started helping out other parties as much as possible with defeating the emerging Cockatrice Kings.

They formed parties with groups of players who gave up on boss battle after arriving in the upper layer and continued to beat the bosses. Meanwhile, I left the party and dug up a mining point in the upper layer and took useful items such as eggs from Cockatrice nests.

"Yun-kun, cheers for the good work."

"How are you?"

"Ah, Magi-san and Emily-san. I gathered quite a bit."

I looked back towards the voice and saw Magi-san and Emily-san who thanks to Taku and others' help defeated a Cockatrice King.

The two were able to safely mine ore in different places thanks to the fact Cockatrices were non-active for them.

"This place is nice. Below there're only fixed types of ore you can get, but here you get various ore types."

"Since conversion rate is high, they're good for covering 【Alchemy】's and 【Synthesis'】 research expanses."

It seemed like Magi-san and Emily-san have acquired plenty of ore.

Speaking with the two, I entered what seemed the Cockatrice King's hay nest to look for useful items.

"But, climbing up this mountain every time to gather would be a real pain."

Agreeing with my words, the two nodded.

And, as I carelessly looked down on the highlands, I saw the mobs nearly all defeated with the only bosses still alive being the master of the highlands, the Lightning Horse and the super-dreadnought mob, the Grand Rock. The Lightning Horse was left alone because his overwhelming strength, but on the other hand——

『"What's left, is the huge turtle! I'll have you give me all the exp and rare items!"』

The players who have survived have attacked the Grand Rock in unison.

Although there wasn't any real need to defeat it, seeing the players trying to fight with the Grand Rock I was totally appalled.

"They're savages."

I spread a sheet and put a tea set on top of it, then treated Magi-san and Emily-san to apple tea made with 【Mountain Apple】's skin and black tea as I watched what's happening below.

"If they actually defeated the Grand Rock, it might be easier to get to the upper layer next time but..."

"No matter how you look at it, it's not going down, that thing——"

The players below us continued to change the way they attacked, but no damage at all was dealt to the Grand Rock.

With 【Sky Eyes】 I saw Myu, Sei-nee and others realize normal attacks won't work and move away slightly to plan a new strategy.

"They sure are doing their best. Why not just give up."

"It's because the enemy in front of them isn't fighting back. They can level up their attack-related Senses this way."

While I listened to Magi-san's commentary, a player jumped in the direction the Grand Rock was travelling to and was trampled. Even if the enemy doesn't fight back, it seemed like accidents still happen.

Watching what's happening below us we finished drinking the apple tea and resumed item collection.

"I want to collect as many items as possible. Who knows when will be the next time I come here——whiiihh?!!"

I tried to look through the bottom of Cockatrice King's nest for items, but suddenly fell into it.

Looking up at Magi-san and Emily-san who rushed over in panic, I waved my arms to them to tell them I'm safe.

"Yun-kun, are you okay?!"

"I-I'm all right."

Under the Cockatrice King's nest spread an empty space inside the rock. Unable to crawl out of the hole I proceeded further and saw a place which looked like a garden.

There was short vegetation growing on the soft ground and a fountain from which a large amount of water flowed towards the back of the cave.

"What's with this place. It's bright."

I looked up towards the ceiling and saw multiple holes big enough for people to pass through, it seemed like they were nests of Cockatrice Kings like the one I fell into.

Light passed through those holes ensuring a sufficient amount of light even in this cave.

"What's this, I wonder. It feels like a broken way of entering. I need to go further to find the exit."

When I checked up the gushing out water, it seemed like it was 【Water of Life】 which was used for crafting and I was also able to confirm there was a portal's transition object. Apparently, this was some kind of a safety area.

I looked around for a little bit and my 【See-Through】 Sense showed a reaction, I swung my pickaxe at its location and was able to get outside.

From what it looked like, the exit was facing the mountain path slightly bellow the summit. Also, there was a Cockatrice King nearby so to enter this area one had to finish at least one battle with the boss.

"Phew, I'm finally out."

I thought that I might have to crawl out of that hole if I didn't find a way to escape.

I immediately returned to the summit to pick up Magi-san, Taku and the others and returned to the entrance.

"Ohhh?! What is this place?!

"It extends further into the back. So there's still more to explore!"

As Taku raised his voice with joy, everyone entered the merry mood seeing a short-cut leading to the upper layer of the Grand Rock.

At the same time, the Grand Rock's activities stopped and the gradually increasing intervals between the shaking have changed into a complete stop.

"Grand Rock stopped, huh."

I'll go back to the 【Atelier】 with the portal found here. About the moment I thought that, a friend call has come from Myu.

『"Yun-oneechan! Everything's over here!"』

"Cheers for the good work. We found a portal here, so I'll be using it to go back to town."

『"EHH?! You found something?! Is there something there?!"』

"No, there's just a hole that seems to continue further inside the mountain."

『"It can't be, an entrance inside the body?! In other words, Grand Rock was a boss needed to be defeated from inside! I'll be coming right away!"』

Myu one-sidedly ended the friend call. I got worried about her and moved outside the cave and saw Myu advance on the back of the unmoving Grand Rock. Around the middle, when she tried to climb further Cockatrices started jumping out of the nests one after another, there was so many of them it was impossible to distinguish Myu's white equipment and the mobs when they tried to chase her away.

"No way, Cockatrices are springing out endlessly. This sure is fantasy."

There was so many Cockatrices jumping out one after another I started wondering where are they coming from, the mobs have fought off all the players who started a splendid charge upwards together with Myu.

Once again, a friend call came from Myu.

『"Why can't I break through?!"』

"Well, because Cockatrices are springing out endlessly."

『"To think I'll have to wait for the next chance to climb up! This is frustrating! Then, Yun-oneechan, explore what's there for me!"』

"Whatt?!"

I'm tired and I want to go back already, I muttered in my mind, but it was all too late, I had a bad feeling.

『"The climbing to super-dreadnought mob's summit, and, a cave leading inside means——an inside-body dungeon!"』

Shouting that, Myu ended the friend call.

I hurried back inside the cave's resting space and saw Taku and the others already finish their preparations for proceeding further.

"A dungeon full of blood and meat should spread ahead of here."

Hearing Taku's words, I felt sick just imagining it.

"There might be some gimmick related to the Grand Rock, or maybe something completely different. That's why, we'll be the first ones entering the unknown area to get information and items!"

When I tried to slip away secretly by approaching the portal for transition, Taku caught me by the shoulders.

"And so, we'll be going as far as we can!"

"Seriously...?"

My shoulders drooped dejectedly, now let's go, my hand was held and I was taken to where Gantz and the others were.

I thought that women wouldn't like going there after hearing there will be blood and meat, but Minute was unexpectedly enthusiastic and although Mami-san had a slightly poor complexion she didn't complain.

"Well then, Yun-kun. I expect a report of the useful items you find."

"We're scheduled to go back together with Emily-chan so do your best."

Smiling, Emily-san and Magi-san quickly escaped from this place. I wish I could do the same. I thought as I watched the two transition away.

Players have flocked into the cave to register with the portal and have started discussing the dungeon's exploration.

"C'mon, Yun! If we don't hurry we won't get the honours of being the first ones to conquer it!"

"Personally, I don't want to challenge the scary unknown and the grotesque flesh and blood..."

The words I muttered didn't reach Taku, he turned a childish smile my way.

"Geez, just this once. I'll go along with you for conquering this dungeon..."

"Great, well then, let's go!"

Taku stood in the front and started walking towards the back of the cave.

In contrast to the dim cave, the party's atmosphere was bright and full of motivation.

It didn't seem like our adventure was over yet.

—STATUS—

Name : Yun

Weapon : Black Maiden's Longbow

Secondary Weapons : Magi-san's Kitchen Knife, Meat Cleaver – Heavy Black, Dismantling Kitchen Knife – Blue Dancer

Armour : CS No.6 Ochre Creator (Outerwear, Underwear, Torso, Waist).

Accessory Equipment Limit 2/10

● Faerie Ring (1)

● Substitute Gem's Ring (1)

Possessed SP33

【Bow Lv46】【Longbow Lv20】【Sky Eyes Lv12】【Swiftness Lv10】【See-Through Lv20】【Sorcery Lv11】【Enchant Arts Lv36】【Earth Element Talent Lv27】【Dosing Lv40】【Cook Lv11】

Unequipped:

【Alchemy Lv38】【Synthesis Lv39】【Crafting Knowledge Lv42】【Taming Lv14】【Engraving Lv23】【Swimming Lv13】【Linguistics Lv24】【Climbing Lv21】

Grand Rock's Climbing Operation

- **Subjugation of the Cockatrice King**
- **Discovering of a mysterious inside-body dungeon?**
- **Blue and Silver Mystic Ring (currently in adjustment)**

Afterword

To those I meet for the first time, and those I meet again. Hello, I'm Aloha Zachou.

You, who have took this book in your hands, A-san in charge of editing, Yukisan-sama who have prepared wonderful illustrations for this work, Hani Kuraun-sama who works on the comicalization and those of you who have seen my work on the net, you have my gratitude.

Currently, in the Dragon Magazine there's the spin-off series with the main series' protagonist's sister, Myu as the protagonist called "Silver Goddess (Muse)" so please do try it.

This time's seventh volume was a re-made, refreshing the episode from the webnovel's version, did you enjoy it? I hope you enjoyed it.

In this time's afterword, I'd like to talk about the image I have of my favourite character.

Among people of all ages, there are people who love the villains. I don't hate the villain aesthetics either.

Having an overwhelming charisma they drive the protagonist to feel despair, and, they have a transcendent beauty. I think that's what

makes the protagonist's turnaround such a success, a highlight. But, I prefer a no-good kind of character.

Specifically, I mean Dr. Wily who appeared in the Megaman series, he's my big favourite. First, speaking of what's good about him, his pride is real strong. From the viewers point of view he has the confidence but you can't feel he's no good despite that. Despite being a mass of pride, when he loses he shows off his speciality "jumping dogeza", I think that for a villain, his being no-good is quite fun.

On the other hand, Dr. Wily shows an extraordinary passion in creating robots which is an incredibly important piece of information for us. Also, many of the robots who work for Dr. Wily aren't made for combat but had other applications, and are given a personality. It me feel like his robots are something like his sons, and not only "existences for combat".

Because of that Dr. Wily is caught by Rockman every time just to be released shortly after, in the next work and the incidents with Dr. Wily aren't too largely affecting the general public. I think that's how it's treated. Most likely the general public just goes "Haha, that Dr. Troublesome did something again" and have a sense of security. Since the story came from the era where games were in NES generation there was no murder depictions and such, thus he went to pr ison for short term. Maybe, he didn't want to turn his children robots into mass-murders. Well, Rockman is another thing. He's the iconic rival of Dr. Light, after all.

In the manga version, depending on the work there's a difference in how Dr. Wily is seen, but personally, Rockman.EXE3's battle with young and passionate Dr. Wily is my favourite.

From now on as well, please take care of me, Aloha Zachou.

In the end, I would like once again to say my gratitude to those who have taken this book into your hands.

I look forward to meeting you all again.

September 2015, Aloha Zachou